

Statement for the Record of Rep. Anna G. Eshoo
Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission
House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
2123 Rayburn House Office Building
December 5, 2019

Chairman Doyle, thank you for holding this important hearing to ensure that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is meeting its responsibilities consistent with the public interest and the laws Congress has passed. Since our last oversight hearing on May 15th, under the leadership of Chairman Ajit Pai, the FCC has prioritized the needs of companies over those of the American people. Two issues are particularly egregious examples of this trend.

Over 18 months ago, we first learned that wireless carriers were selling the real-time location data of Americans to data brokers, which then sold the data to bounty hunters, stalkers, and other bad actors. The FCC said it is investigating the matter. However, despite repeated requests for more information about this investigation, Chairman Pai has been silent on the matter. At the last oversight hearing, I asked Chairman Pai why he was withholding information about the investigation from his fellow Commissioners. He incorrectly stated that he hasn't withheld any information. FCC Commissioners should have received more information when they asked for it months ago. Now, it's time for this Subcommittee to be briefed on the matter *in full*, as many of us requested in a letter recently.

I'm also extremely worried about Lifeline. Over 38 million Americans are eligible for subsidized phone and broadband through this program. Yet, less than 20% of eligible Americans actually take advantage of Lifeline. Worse, in the last three years, enrollment has fallen from 12.76 million in the third quarter of 2016 to 6.92 million last quarter. That's an *unfathomable* decline of 45%.

This is not incidental. It's caused by what appears to be a systematic assault on the program. The FCC "hard launched" the National Verifier program in states *before* having access to the needed state databases for SNAP and Medicaid. When several states petitioned to delay hard launches of the National Verifier, the FCC denied these requests. When Lifeline providers requested changes to the National Verifier Carrier application programming interface (API), we're told the FCC has been unwilling to work with the providers. Furthermore, the FCC is ignoring pleas from wireless carriers, public interest groups, and Lifeline providers to reconsider the Commission's escalation of minimum service standards and the associated decrease of subsidies for voice-only services. This puts an unacceptable economic squeeze on Lifeline providers, which may need to exit the market or limit their offerings. It's hard to see these developments as anything but intentional efforts to weaken an important social safety net program our country needs.