

# Advocates Applaud FCC Vote to Modernize Lifeline to Bring Affordable Broadband Internet to Low-Income Households

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH 31, 2016 || Contact: Jan Kruse, jkruse@nclc.org or 617-542-8010

**(WASHINGTON)** Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) took a major step forward for millions of low-income households by modernizing the Lifeline program to include affordable broadband Internet service. “The FCC’s long-awaited vote to modernize the Lifeline program recognizes that access to the Internet today is a necessity, not a luxury, and the FCC’s action will benefit the 40 million Lifeline-eligible households who need affordable, quality 21st century communications,” said National Consumer Law Center attorney Olivia Wein.

The Lifeline program was established in the mid-1980s to connect low-income households to emergency services, jobs, healthcare, teachers, friends, and family through affordable voice phone service. The current Lifeline support is \$9.25 a month. The FCC’s modernization order now allows Lifeline participants to direct their Lifeline discount toward affordable broadband service.

Access to broadband today is as essential for access to opportunity as electricity was in the last century. For those who can afford broadband service, broadband integration in modern life has been nearly ubiquitous, and Internet access has transformed the classroom. As FCC Commissioner Rosenworcel has noted, the “homework gap” is the cruelest part of the digital divide. From access to jobs and healthcare, the harmful effects of digital exclusion increase, especially as more necessities of modern life move online.

“We thank FCC Chairman Wheeler and Commissioner Clyburn for their leadership in modernizing the Lifeline program and Commissioner Rosenworcel for elevating the need to close the ‘homework gap’ for our nation’s children,” said Wein. “And Commissioner Clyburn has been a stalwart champion of the most vulnerable in our society on a range of issues and we truly appreciate her tireless efforts to improve the Lifeline program for millions of low-income families.”

###

Since 1969, the nonprofit **National Consumer Law Center® (NCLC®)** has used its expertise in consumer law and energy policy to work for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults, in the United States. NCLC’s expertise includes policy analysis and advocacy; consumer law and energy publications; litigation; expert witness services, and training and advice for advocates. NCLC works with nonprofit and legal services organizations, private attorneys, policymakers, and federal and state government and courts across the nation to stop exploitative practices, help financially stressed families build and retain wealth, and advance economic fairness. [www.nclc.org](http://www.nclc.org)