

Statement of National Consumer Law Center Staff Attorney Olivia Wein Regarding FCC Proposal to Cap Critical Universal Service Fund Programs

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National Consumer Law Center contacts: Olivia Wein (owein@nclc.org) or Jan Kruse (jkruse@nclc.org) or (617) 542-8010

(Washington) The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has proposed to cap the Universal Service Fund programs, which provide essential funding for affordable telecommunications services for low-income households and supports affordable broadband in rural areas, and for schools, libraries and rural healthcare facilities.

Following is a statement from **National Consumer Law Center Staff Attorney Olivia Wein** regarding the proposed change.

“Affordability is a main barrier for low-income households to access essential communications. A new report by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau finds that telecommunications debt is one of the most common types of debt sought by creditors or debt collectors. It is premature for the FCC to consider capping the Lifeline telecommunications program, which is funded through the Universal Service Fund, as it plays a critical role in bridging the digital divide for low-income households and will unnecessarily ration Lifeline support. Instead the FCC should ensure a competitive Lifeline marketplace with products that help close the homework gap, facilitate telemedicine, and help people to find and keep jobs.”