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2015 Adopted Resolution

The U.S. Conference of Mayors
83rd Annual Meeting
June 19-22, 2015
San Francisco

Modernize the FCC's Lifeline Program to Support Broadband Adoption

WHEREAS, high speed Internet service is no longer a luxury, but is a necessity for children to complete their homework and develop skills for a 21st century economy, for adults to find and apply for jobs, for entrepreneurs to build their businesses and for residents to access public information and services; and

WHEREAS, high speed Internet service is not affordable for some of our nation's residents; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Communication Commissio's (*sic*) Lifeline Program supports the Universal Service principle by providing a way to make in-home and mobile telephone service more affordable for low-income Americans; and

WHEREAS, qualifying participants in Lifeline must have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal poverty line or participate in government assistance programs including Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, TANF, and Head Start, and therefore, are people who can benefit from the Internet's health information, consumer options, employment opportunities, education resources, and civic potential; and

WHEREAS, over 12 million people used the Lifeline Program in 2014 to subsidize their telephone service; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission has to date implemented significant reforms to increase accountability and improve program efficiency and must continue to exercise strict oversight of the program to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse; and

WHEREAS, shifting responsibility for eligibility verification from the provider to a responsible third-party administrator will further strengthen the integrity of the program by eliminating an incentive for fraud; and

WHEREAS, aligning the Lifeline program with other elements of the social safety net as

appropriate will increase use of the program by those who need it most for essential communication services; and

WHEREAS, many localities are finding innovative strategies to expand broadband and other high speed Internet infrastructure that could be advanced by Lifeline modernization; and

WHEREAS, public libraries have been piloting lending services for high speed Internet services to help to close the digital divide, which could be an additional vehicle for subsidizing access to high-speed internet services for those who are unable to afford them,

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the United States Conference of Mayors urges the Federal Communications Commission to implement and the Administration and Congress to support the modernization of the Lifeline Program to permit eligible households to qualify for the communications functions they need, including high-speed Internet access, to eliminate the digital divide and close the homework gap, support job searches, and access necessary services and in engage civic life.

Projected Cost: Unknown