



RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF MODERNIZING THE LIFELINE PROGRAM FOR UBIQUITOUS AND AFFORDABLE ACCESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Committee: Telecommunications

Resolution: TEL-20-01

1. **WHEREAS**, the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative (NOBEL) Women
2. has been a long-time supporter of programs and initiatives to connect underserved and
3. low-income communities to broadband in an effort to support their economic, healthcare,
4. and educational needs; and
5. **WHEREAS**, [Lifeline](#), a federal government benefit program supported by the Universal
6. Service Fund was initiated in 1985 to help people connect to jobs, family and 911
7. services; expanded with the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to provide universal
8. service in high cost areas, connection charges to initiate telephone service, rural health
9. care support, and schools and libraries support; and further expanded in 2016 to support
10. stand-alone mobile or fixed broadband services as well as bundled voice and data service
11. packages; and
12. **WHEREAS**, the Pew Research Center found in its [Mobile Technology and Home](#)
13. [Broadband 2019](#) report, internet usage is near ubiquitous for young adults college
14. graduates and those from high-income households; however, adoption gaps remain for
15. communities of colors, older adults, rural residents, and those with lower levels of
16. education and income; and
17. **WHEREAS**, According to a Pew Research Center [survey](#) conducted in early April
18. 2020, 53% of U.S. adults stated the internet has been essential for them during the
19. COVID-19 global pandemic with concerns related to the digital divide and digital
20. homework gap being more prevalent for those with in rural, urban and lower income
21. communities. The pandemic has also caused [economic hardship](#) for many Americans
22. with low-income communities being hit the hardest; and; and
23. **WHEREAS**, families have to rely on broadband connections for access to jobs, schools,
24. healthcare agencies, and financial institutions. Additionally, social distancing

25. requirements has increased reliance on voice and broadband services for social
26. connections to families, local and religious communities; and
27. **WHEREAS**, according to the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), the
28. [2020 estimated rate](#) at which Lifeline-eligible households participate in the Lifeline
29. Program is at 23%.
30. **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, the NOBEL Women calls upon Congress to create
31. an enhanced broadband benefit program for low-income consumers that would build
32. upon prior efforts to effectively close the digital divide for all communities and withstand
33. national emergencies.
34. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, such an effort should include: an increase in benefits
35. funded through direct appropriations; modernization in the distribution of the benefits
36. directly to eligible consumers in an effort to increase participation and adoption rates; and
37. provide additional funds for broadband deployment to rural communities.
38. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the NOBEL Women urges federal support for local
39. organizations to provide outreach and education on the benefits of the program, and
40. digital literacy training to take advantage of the opportunities supported by 21st century
41. broadband connectivity.
42. **NOW, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the NOBEL Women send a copy of this
43. resolution to the President of the United States, Members of Congress, the Federal
44. Communications Commission, and other federal, state, and local government officials, as
45. appropriate.

**Introduced by The Honorable Karen Camper
Tennessee General Assembly**