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LIFELINE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Many consumers may be newly eligible due to the financial impact of COVID-19

Carson City, Nev. – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic’s unprecedented impact on the economy and Nevada consumers, the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN), Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) are partnering to increase awareness of the federal Lifeline program, which helps eligible low-income consumers access affordable broadband and phone services.

A consequence of the pandemic is many consumers eligible for Lifeline for the first time due to financial hardships such as unemployment may be unaware of the program or how to apply for benefits. The FCC recently granted temporary relief to newly unemployed consumers. Specifically, the FCC has eased documentation requirements for those seeking to qualify for Lifeline based on income. During the current crisis, it is critical that Nevedans have the connectivity they need to stay in touch with family, telecommute, search for jobs, participate in remote learning and telehealth, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Lifeline is a Universal Service Fund program that provides qualifying low-income consumers with monthly discounts on Internet or phone service. Consumers can receive up to $9.25 in federal Lifeline benefits and an additional $3.50 from the Nevada Lifeline fund, for a combined benefit of $12.75 for non-tribal consumers. Certain eligible Tribal consumers can receive up to $34.25 in federal Lifeline discounts. Non-tribal consumers qualify for Lifeline if: (1) they participate in certain federal benefits programs (such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Federal Public Housing or the Veterans Pension and Survivor’s Benefit); or (2) their household income is at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Until August 31, 2020, consumers may be eligible to use a submitted application for unemployment benefits to assist in demonstrating eligibility. The Lifeline discount is limited to one benefit per household.

More information on program eligibility and how to apply directly through the National Eligibility Verifier, including links to a list of Lifeline providers in Nevada, is available at www.lifelinesupport.org. Downloadable materials about the Lifeline program are available on the “Community Outreach” page, including “How to Apply” fact sheets in English and Spanish as well as for Tribal consumers.

For additional Lifeline application support, consumers also may contact their provider of telephone or internet service, including wireless providers. Lifeline is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company and information on the National Eligibility Verifier, along with other resources, also is available at usac.org/lifeline under COVID-19 Response.

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