



April 24, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California Lifeline Program- COVID 19 Relief

Dear Governor Newsom,

We write to commend you for working tirelessly and expeditiously to provide public health safeguards as well as social and economic relief during this unprecedented crisis. As such, we respectfully request that during the COVID-19 crisis you maximize and enhance the existing *California Lifeline Program*, an underutilized program that provides real access and connectivity to millions of low-income households.

California's Lifeline program is the premier program in the nation. It offers low income families smartphone devices, unlimited talk and text, as well as some data. No other state in the nation provides these benefits to low income subscribers and no other state is positioned to maximize the Lifeline program during shelter at home policies.

Many advocates for programs such as CalFresh, unemployment, school nutrition, and other safety net programs, are currently working with providers to install the apps onto the devices being provided to Lifeline subscribers. This allows the subscriber to have immediate access to critical information to assist them during this crisis. Due to this effort, we are beginning to see increases in enrollment, correlated to the increase in need during this crisis. However, participation in the program is **still less than 40%**.

During this crisis we need to reach 90-100% participation levels as well as leverage all available resources. Therefore, the undersigned low income advocates respectfully request that as a direct response to COVID 19 the state maximizes and enhances the Lifeline program. Specifically:

- **Increase enrollment and retainment**
 - o Engage low income advocates in outreach strategies
 - o Allow customers to stay enrolled for 12-18 months before having to re-prove income verification (recertification process)

- Simplify recertification process by allowing providers to reach out to customers instead of the Third Party Administrator hired by the CPUC that is unknown to the customer.
- Further fix the recertification process by allowing customers to recertify online as opposed to a mail in process
- **Increase Lifeline services**
 - allow lifeline subscribers to have broadband access—a minimum of 8 GB a month
 - Allow more than one subsidy per household to accommodate distance learning.
- **Remove barriers to enrollment-** Thousands of eligible subscribers are unable to enroll because of limited documents or
 - Increase categorical eligibility to included Earned Income Tax Credit, Community College financial Aid, and Unemployment Insurance
 - Allow Prison ID as valid form of ID
- **Ensure budget projection meet needs**
 - The CPUC has discretion to fund the program based on need. The January projections are inadequate to address the growing need. We request an updated budget that reflects increased participation and enhanced series to low income families.

Again, we applaud your leadership during this crisis. We look forward to working with you and your office to increase the services and programs for the most underserved communities. Please contact Jessica Bartholow at jbartholow@wclp.org or Jose Atilio Hernandez at jhernandez@ideatecal.com if you have any additional questions.

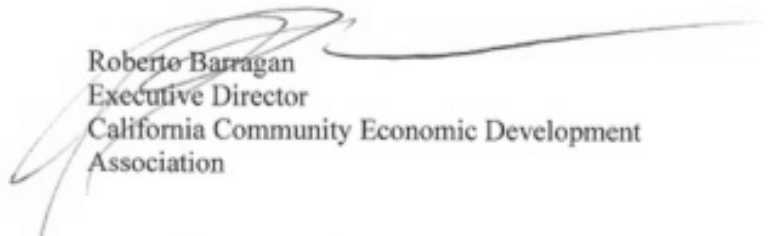
Yours Truly,



Jessica Bartholow
Policy Advocate
Western Center on Law & Poverty



Veronica Padilla
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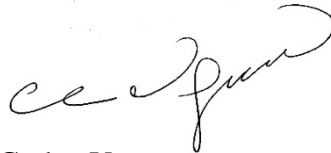
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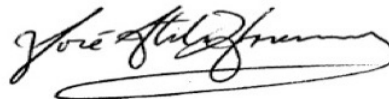
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Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
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Assemblymember Phil Ting, Budget Chair
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