

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4438

To direct the Federal Communications Commission to establish a program to make grants available to States to inform individuals of potential eligibility for the Lifeline program of the Commission, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 29, 2026

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Ms. DUCKWORTH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To direct the Federal Communications Commission to establish a program to make grants available to States to inform individuals of potential eligibility for the Lifeline program of the Commission, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Promoting Access to
5 Broadband Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. LIFELINE ENROLLMENT OUTREACH GRANTS.**

7 (a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

1 (1) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
2 means the Federal Communications Commission.

3 (2) COVERED INDIVIDUAL.—The term “covered
4 individual” means an individual who—

5 (A) is an eligible-but-not-enrolled indi-
6 vidual; or

7 (B) has the potential to be a qualifying
8 low-income consumer under 54.409 of title 47,
9 Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor
10 regulation, due to the eligibility of the indi-
11 vidual, a dependent of the individual, or the
12 household of the individual to receive benefits
13 from or participate in, as applicable, a program
14 described in such section 54.409.

15 (3) ELIGIBLE-BUT-NOT-ENROLLED INDI-
16 VIDUAL.—The term “eligible-but-not-enrolled indi-
17 vidual” means an individual who is a qualifying low-
18 income consumer under section 54.409 of title 47,
19 Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regu-
20 lation, but is not enrolled in the Lifeline program.

21 (4) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
22 has the meaning given the term “Indian tribe” in
23 section 4 of the Native American Housing Assist-
24 ance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C.
25 4103).

1 (5) LIFELINE PROGRAM.—The term “Lifeline
2 program” means the program set forth in subpart E
3 of part 54 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations,
4 or any successor regulation.

5 (6) REACH.—The term “reach” means, with re-
6 spect to an individual, to inform the individual of po-
7 tential eligibility for the Lifeline program and to
8 provide the individual with information about the
9 Lifeline program, as described in subsection (e).

10 (7) STATE.—The term “State” means each
11 State of the United States, the District of Columbia,
12 each commonwealth, territory, or possession of the
13 United States, and each Indian Tribe.

14 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Commission shall estab-
15 lish a competitive program to make grants available to
16 States to inform covered individuals of potential eligibility
17 for the Lifeline program.

18 (c) APPLICATION.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may only
20 award a grant under this section to a State that
21 submits an application at such time, in such form,
22 and with such information and assurances as the
23 Commission may require.

1 (2) MATTERS REQUIRED TO BE INCLUDED.—

2 An application submitted by a State under para-
3 graph (1) shall include—

4 (A) the number of covered individuals in
5 the State;

6 (B) a plan for the activities that the State
7 will conduct using grant funds, including a list
8 of each agency within the State that will assist
9 in carrying out those activities; and

10 (C) an estimate of the percentage of eligi-
11 ble-but-not-enrolled individuals in the State who
12 will be reached by those activities.

13 (d) SELECTION.—

14 (1) MINIMUM NUMBER OF STATES.—The Com-
15 mission shall award grants under this section to not
16 fewer than 25 percent of the States that submit an
17 application under subsection (c).

18 (2) FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION.—In award-
19 ing grants under this section, the Commission shall
20 give favorable consideration to—

21 (A) States that have higher numbers of
22 covered individuals; and

23 (B) States proposing, in the plans sub-
24 mitted under subsection (c)(2)(B), to conduct
25 activities that have the potential to reach higher

percentages of eligible-but-not-enrolled individuals in those States, as determined by the Commission, taking into consideration the estimates submitted under subsection (c)(2)(C).

(3) GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Commission shall, to the maximum extent practicable, select States from different geographic regions of the United States.

(e) USE OF FUNDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A State that receives a grant under this section shall use grant funds, in accordance with the plan included in the application of the State under subsection (c)(2)(B), to—

(A) inform covered individuals and organizations or agencies that serve covered individuals, as the case may be under the terms of the grant awarded to the State, of potential eligibility for the Lifeline program;

(B) provide covered individuals with information about the Lifeline program, including—

(i) how to apply for the Lifeline program; and

(ii) a description of the prohibition on more than 1 subscriber in each household

1 receiving a service provided under the Life-
 2 line program; and

3 (C) partner with nonprofit and community-
 4 based organizations that have a proven track
 5 record of working with covered individuals in
 6 implementing digital inclusion initiatives to pro-
 7 vide covered individuals with—

8 (i) assistance applying for the Lifeline
 9 program; and

10 (ii) information about product and
 11 technology choices.

12 (2) MULTIPLE STATE AGENCIES.—A State that
 13 receives a grant under this section may provide
 14 grant funds to 1 or more agencies located within the
 15 State, as identified under subsection (c)(2)(B), to
 16 carry out the activities under the grant.

17 (f) OUTREACH TO STATES REGARDING GRANT PRO-
 18 GRAM.—Before accepting applications for the grant pro-
 19 gram established under this section, the Commission shall
 20 conduct outreach to States to ensure that States are aware
 21 of the grant program and how to apply for a grant under
 22 the grant program.

23 (g) REGULATIONS REQUIRED.—Not later than 30
 24 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commis-

1 sion shall promulgate regulations to implement this sec-
2 tion.

3 (h) ENFORCEMENT.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—A violation of this section or
5 a regulation promulgated under this section shall be
6 treated as a violation of the Communications Act of
7 1934 (47 U.S.C. 151 et seq.) or a regulation pro-
8 mulgated under that Act.

9 (2) MANNER OF ENFORCEMENT.—The Com-
10 mission shall enforce this section and the regulations
11 promulgated under this section in the same manner,
12 by the same means, and with the same jurisdiction,
13 powers, and duties as though all applicable terms
14 and provisions of the Communications Act of 1934
15 (47 U.S.C. 151 et seq.) were incorporated into and
16 made a part of this section.

17 (i) EXEMPTIONS.—

18 (1) CERTAIN RULEMAKING REQUIREMENTS.—
19 Section 553 of title 5, United States Code, shall not
20 apply to a regulation promulgated under this section
21 or a rulemaking proceeding to promulgate such a
22 regulation.

23 (2) PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT REQUIRE-
24 MENTS.—A collection of information conducted or
25 sponsored under the regulations required under this

1 section shall not constitute a collection of informa-
2 tion for the purposes of subchapter I of chapter 35
3 of title 44, United States Code (commonly known as
4 the “Paperwork Reduction Act”).

5 (j) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after
7 establishing the grant program under this section,
8 the Commission shall submit to Congress a report
9 evaluating the effectiveness of the grant program.

10 (2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under
11 paragraph (1) shall include—

12 (A) the number of individuals notified of
13 Lifeline program eligibility by States receiving
14 grants under this section;

15 (B) the number of new applicants to the
16 Lifeline program from States receiving grants
17 under this section, including the number of
18 those applicants who enrolled in the Lifeline
19 program; and

20 (C) the cost-effectiveness of the grant pro-
21 gram established under this section.

22 (k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
23 authorized to be appropriated to the Commission such
24 sums as may be necessary to carry out this section for

1 the first 5 full fiscal years beginning after the establish-
 2 ment of the grant program under this section.

3 **SEC. 3. GRANTS TO STATES TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL**
 4 **LIFELINE ELIGIBILITY VERIFIER.**

5 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6 (1) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
 7 means the Federal Communications Commission.

8 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
 9 ty” means a State that, not later than 30 days after
 10 the date of enactment of this Act, submits to the
 11 Commission an application for a grant under this
 12 section containing such information as the Commis-
 13 sion may require.

14 (3) STATE.—The term “State” means each
 15 State of the United States, the District of Columbia,
 16 each commonwealth, territory, or possession of the
 17 United States, and each federally recognized Indian
 18 Tribe.

19 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after
 20 the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall
 21 establish a program to provide a grant, from amounts ap-
 22 propriated under subsection (e), to each eligible entity for
 23 the purpose described in subsection (c).

24 (c) PURPOSE.—The Commission shall make a grant
 25 to each eligible entity for the purpose of establishing, re-

1 newing, reestablishing, or maintaining or amending a con-
 2 nection between the databases of the eligible entity that
 3 contain information concerning the receipt by a household,
 4 or a member of a household, of benefits under a program
 5 administered by the eligible entity (including any benefit
 6 provided under the supplemental nutrition assistance pro-
 7 gram under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C.
 8 2011 et seq.)) and the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier
 9 so that the receipt by a household, or a member of a
 10 household, of benefits under the benefits program—

11 (1) is reflected in the National Lifeline Eligi-
 12 bility Verifier; and

13 (2) can be used to verify eligibility for the Life-
 14 line program set forth in subpart E, part 54, of title
 15 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor
 16 regulation.

17 (d) DISBURSEMENT OF GRANT FUNDS.—Not later
 18 than 120 days after the date on which the Commission
 19 establishes the program under subsection (b), funds pro-
 20 vided under each grant made under that subsection shall
 21 be disbursed to the eligible entity receiving the grant.

22 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION.—There is
 23 authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be nec-
 24 essary to carry out this section.

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