

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2545

To direct the Federal Communications Commission to establish a program to make grants to States to inform Medicaid enrollees and SNAP participants of potential eligibility for the Lifeline program of the Commission.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Ms. HARRIS, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) 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 to States to inform Medicaid enrollees and SNAP participants of potential eligibility for the Lifeline program of the Commission.

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 2019”.

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 INDIVIDUALS.—The term “cov-
4 ered individuals” means—

5 (A) in the case of a State applying for a
6 grant to inform Medicaid enrollees of potential
7 Lifeline program eligibility, Medicaid enrollees;

8 (B) in the case of a State applying for a
9 grant to inform SNAP participants of potential
10 Lifeline program eligibility, SNAP participants;
11 and

12 (C) in the case of a State applying for a
13 grant to inform both Medicaid enrollees and
14 SNAP participants of potential Lifeline pro-
15 gram eligibility, Medicaid enrollees and SNAP
16 participants.

17 (3) ELIGIBLE-BUT-NOT-ENROLLED.—The term
18 “eligible-but-not-enrolled” means, with respect to an
19 individual, that the individual is eligible for the Life-
20 line program but is not enrolled in the Lifeline pro-
21 gram.

22 (4) LIFELINE PROGRAM.—The term “Lifeline
23 program” means the Lifeline program of the Com-
24 mission.

1 (5) MEDICAID ENROLLEE.—The term “Med-
 2 icaid enrollee” means, with respect to a State, an in-
 3 dividual enrolled in the State plan under title XIX
 4 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.)
 5 or a waiver of that plan.

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

11 (7) SNAP PARTICIPANT.—The term “SNAP
 12 participant” means an individual who is a member
 13 of a household that participates in the supplemental
 14 nutrition assistance program under the Food and
 15 Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.).

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

21 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Commission shall estab-
 22 lish a competitive program to make grants to States to
 23 inform Medicaid enrollees or SNAP participants, or both,
 24 of potential eligibility for the Lifeline program.

25 (c) APPLICATION.—

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

6 (2) MATTERS REQUIRED TO BE INCLUDED.—
 7 An application submitted by a State under para-
 8 graph (1) shall include—

9 (A) the number of covered individuals in
 10 the State;

11 (B) a plan for the activities that the State
 12 will conduct using grant funds, including a list
 13 of each agency within the State that will assist
 14 in carrying out those activities; and

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

18 (d) SELECTION.—

19 (1) MINIMUM OF 5 STATES.—The Commission
 20 shall award grants under this section to not fewer
 21 than 5 States.

22 (2) FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION.—In award-
 23 ing grants under this section, the Commission shall
 24 give favorable consideration—

1 (A) to States that have higher numbers of
2 covered individuals; and

3 (B) to States proposing, in the plans sub-
4 mitted under subsection (c)(2)(B), to conduct
5 activities that have the potential to reach higher
6 percentages of eligible-but-not-enrolled individ-
7 uals in those States, as determined by the Com-
8 mission, taking into consideration the estimates
9 submitted under subsection (c)(2)(C).

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

14 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—

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

19 (A) inform Medicaid enrollees or SNAP
20 participants, or both, and organizations or
21 agencies that serve those individuals, as the
22 case may be under the terms of the grant
23 awarded to the State, of potential eligibility for
24 the Lifeline program;

1 (B) provide those enrollees or participants,
 2 or both, as the case may be, with information
 3 about the Lifeline program, including—

4 (i) how to apply for the Lifeline pro-
 5 gram; and

6 (ii) a description of the prohibition on
 7 more than 1 subscriber in each household
 8 receiving a service provided under the Life-
 9 line program; and

10 (C) partner with nonprofit and community-
 11 based organizations to provide those enrollees
 12 or participants, or both, as the case may be,
 13 with assistance applying for the Lifeline pro-
 14 gram and information about product and tech-
 15 nology choices.

16 (2) MULTIPLE STATE AGENCIES.—A State that
 17 receives a grant under this section may provide
 18 grant funds to one or more agencies located within
 19 the State to carry out the activities under the grant.

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

1 (g) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

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

6 (2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under
7 paragraph (1) shall include—

8 (A) the number of individuals notified of
9 Lifeline program eligibility by States receiving
10 grants under this section;

11 (B) the number of new applicants to the
12 Lifeline program from States receiving grants
13 under this section, including the number of
14 those applicants whose Lifeline program appli-
15 cations were approved and the number of those
16 applicants whose Lifeline program applications
17 were denied; and

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

20 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
21 authorized to be appropriated to the Commission such
22 sums as may be necessary to carry out this section for
23 the first 5 full fiscal years beginning after the establish-
24 ment of the grant program under this section.

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