

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

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.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

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**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

1 percentages of eligible-but-not-enrolled individ-  
2 uals in those States, as determined by the Com-  
3 mission, taking into consideration the estimates  
4 submitted under subsection (c)(2)(C).

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

9 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—

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

14 (A) inform covered individuals and organi-  
15 zations or agencies that serve covered individ-  
16 uals, as the case may be under the terms of the  
17 grant awarded to the State, of potential eligi-  
18 bility for the Lifeline program;

19 (B) provide covered individuals with infor-  
20 mation about the Lifeline program, including—

21 (i) how to apply for the Lifeline pro-  
22 gram; and

23 (ii) a description of the prohibition on  
24 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.