



**Testimony of Lisa McCabe**  
**CTIA**  
**In Opposition to House Bill 3802**  
**Before the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Economic Development and**  
**Emerging Technologies**

**October 22, 2019**

Chairs Lesser and Ferrante, Vice Chairs Crighton and Gordon and members of the Committee, on behalf of CTIA, the trade association for the wireless communications industry, I write in opposition to House Bill 3802, which mandates the provision of discounted internet service to low income seniors in the Commonwealth.

This bill is unnecessary as a federal program already exists that provides eligible low-income consumers in every state with discounted phone and internet services.

Since 1985, the Federal Communication Commission's Lifeline program has provided a discount on phone service for qualifying low-income consumers. Lifeline is part of the federal Universal Service Fund. The Lifeline program is available to eligible low-income consumers in every state, territory, commonwealth, and on Tribal lands.

On March 31, 2016, the Federal Communications Commission adopted a comprehensive reform and modernization of the Lifeline program, which included broadband as a support service in the Lifeline program.<sup>1</sup>

Eligibility for the Lifeline program includes Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, and Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Programs as well as explicit eligibility criteria for Tribal specific programs.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, HB 3802, mandates that internet service providers, including wireless service providers, offer a discounted rate on services and its passage may violate 47 U.S.C. § 332(c), which provides that "no State or local government shall have any authority to regulate the entry of or the rates charged by any commercial mobile service or any private mobile service." Passage of the bill would functionally permit Massachusetts to regulate the rate structure of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-modernizes-lifeline-program-digital-age>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers>



wireless providers in the commonwealth, which would bring Massachusetts into conflict with federal law.

Because a federal program already exists to help low income and senior consumers in Massachusetts, a separate state level mandate is unnecessary. CTIA and its members respectfully urge you not to move this bill.