

**From:** [Melnykovych, Andrew \(PSC\)](#)  
**To:** ["Ordover, Eileen"](#)  
**Subject:** RE: ACM Comments Case No, 2016-00059  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 4:25:26 PM

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Dear Ms. Ordover:

The comments of the Associated Community Ministries will be placed into the case record in the above-referenced matter.

Thank you.

*Andrew Melnykovych*

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**From:** Ordover, Eileen [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 26, 2016 3:50 PM  
**To:** PSC - Public Information Officer  
**Subject:** ACM Comments Case No, 2016-00059

Attached please find the comments of Association of Community Ministries, Inc. in Case No. 2016-00059, An Inquiry Into the State Universal Fund.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Eileen Ordover**  
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**COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY**  
**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**  
**In the Matter of: An Inquiry Into the State Universal Service Fund**  
**Case No. 2016-00059**

**Comments of Association of Community Ministries, Inc.**

Association of Community Ministries, Inc. (ACM) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the future of the Kentucky Universal Service Fund (KUSF) and to highlight the role of the KUSF in affording low-income households access to basic telephone service. In particular, ACM is concerned that the vulnerable people it serves be able to make emergency calls – such as to 911 – as needed. ACM urges the PSC to refrain from making any changes to the KUSF that would jeopardize this access, and to make such reasonable changes as may be necessary to preserve it.

ACM is an umbrella organization for the 15 independent community ministries that provide services to low income individuals in Louisville Metro. Each ministry serves a designated geographical area of the community. The common mission of the 15 ministries is to serve as an emergency assistance network encompassing all of Jefferson County.

ACM members serve a financially fragile population. Many emergency assistance clients have significant health issues and subsist on Supplemental Security Income (“SSI”), a program for elderly people and people with disabilities who are living in poverty. The maximum SSI benefit is currently \$733.00 per month for an individual, and \$1,100.00 for a married couple (where both partners meet the eligibility criteria). We also have clients among the working poor, including many who are eligible for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) because their household income is

at or below 130% of the federal poverty level. For a one-person household, for example, this currently means gross income of \$1,287/month or less; for a family of four, \$2,633/month or less. Kentucky's high poverty rates mean that many households are subsisting, or trying to subsist, at these income levels.<sup>1</sup>

Households with incomes in these ranges are highly vulnerable to financial crises, and it is for this reason that ACM members together operate its county-wide emergency assistance network. Among the emergency services ACM members provide is assistance with utility payments. Under these programs, member ministries assist households in crisis to pay their energy and water bills. Funding is provided by LG&E, the Louisville Water Company and Louisville Metro Government.

There is, however, no like funding available for assistance with telephone bills. The discounts and plans funded through Lifeline and KUSF are all that comprise the safety net for low income households unable to afford basic telephone service and, so, the ability to communicate in an emergency. Even with the current KUSF subsidy of \$3.50, Kentucky households with the lowest incomes lag behind peer households in most of the rest of the country in access to voice service: Kentucky is in the bottom fifth of the states for voice penetration among households with income below \$10,000, and in the bottom tenth for voice penetration among households in the \$10,000 - \$19,999 range.<sup>2</sup> In this

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<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Small Area Income and Poverty Estimate for 2014 (the latest year for which data is available), 19% of Kentucky's population lives in poverty, compared with 15.5% of the U.S. population as a whole. Kentucky's child poverty rate is 25.9% (compared with 21.7% for the U.S.). Kentucky also has a higher percentage of households receiving SSI benefits for the disabled and elderly poor than the U.S. overall (7.9% versus 5.3%).

<sup>2</sup> Federal Communications Commission, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, *2015 Universal Service Monitoring Report* at page 52, Table 6.8.

context, it is critical that the Commission rigorously scrutinize any course of action for its potential to curtail access to basic voice service for those Kentucky households poor enough to qualify for a Lifeline subsidy.

Doing so will require a two-step approach. First, the Commission must determine what impact a proposed action – whether a reduction in the monthly KUSF per line subsidy, a cap on participation or any other cost-cutting or regulatory measure – is likely to have on the Lifeline plans and discounts marketed to Kentucky consumers. Second, it must determine whether that result will diminish access to (or the affordability of) basic voice service for poor households. This would be a complex undertaking in any case, but is even more fraught in light of the Federal Communications Commission’s recent order in its Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization docket.<sup>3</sup> The 163-page report and order adds many points of uncertainty to the analysis, mandating, among other things, new minimum standards for broadband and voice service and a 5-year phase out of voice-only service. It is impossible to predict at this time how the telecommunications market will respond, let alone how the interplay between that response and any potential cuts to the KUSF subsidy, caps on disbursements, or other measures will affect plans marketed in Kentucky, and so the cost of accessing basic, emergency telephone service.

For all of the above reasons, ACM urges the Commission to proceed with extreme caution in this matter; to refrain from making any changes to the KUSF that might jeopardize access to affordable basic voice service for all qualifying households; and to make such reasonable changes as may be necessary to preserve it. ACM thanks the

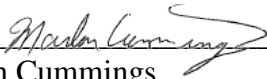
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<sup>3</sup> In the Matter of Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization et al., Third Report and Order, Further Report and Order, and Order on Reconsideration, WC Dkt. Nos. 11-42 et al. (rel. April 27, 2016).

Commission for this opportunity to be heard, and reserves the right to file additional comments as warranted by future developments in the Commission's investigation.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marlon Cummings  
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\*Beaver Telecom, LLC  
Beaver Telecom, LLC  
1509 McDuffie Street  
Houston, TX 77019

\*NextGen Communications, Inc.  
NextGen Communications, Inc.  
275 West Street, Suite 400  
Annapolis, MD 21401

\*BellSouth Telecommunications, LLC db  
BellSouth Telecommunications, LLC dba AT&T  
601 W Chestnut Street  
4th Floor East  
Louisville, KY 40203

\*BellSouth Telecommunications, LLC db  
BellSouth Telecommunications, LLC dba AT&T  
601 W Chestnut Street  
4th Floor East  
Louisville, KY 40203

\*Velocity Networks of Kentucky, Inc.  
Velocity Networks of Kentucky, Inc.  
120 East Third Street  
Russellville, KY 42276

\*Windstream NuVox, LLC  
Windstream NuVox, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Teleport Communications America, LLC  
Teleport Communications America, LLC  
601 W Chestnut Street  
4th Floor East  
Louisville, KY 40203

\*Telecommunication Properties, Inc.  
Telecommunication Properties, Inc.  
901 Main Street, Suite 2600  
Dallas, TX 75202

\*Talk America, LLC  
Talk America, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*BellSouth Long Distance, Inc. dba AT  
BellSouth Long Distance, Inc. dba AT&T Long  
601 W Chestnut Street, Suite 408  
Louisville, KY 40203

\*i-Wireless, LLC  
i-Wireless, LLC  
1 Levee Way, Suite 3104  
Newport, KY 41071

\*Network Telephone, LLC  
Network Telephone, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Cricket Wireless, LLC  
Cricket Wireless, LLC  
12735 Morris Road, Building 200  
Alpharetta, GA 30004

\*Eastern Telephone & Technologies  
Eastern Telephone & Technologies  
106 Power Drive  
Pikeville, KY 41501

\*McLeodUSA Telecommunications Service  
McLeodUSA Telecommunications Services, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Duo County Telephone Cooperative Cor  
Duo County Telephone Cooperative Corporation,  
2150 N Main Street  
P. O. Box 80  
Jamestown, KY 42629

\*Windstream Norlight, LLC  
Windstream Norlight, LLC  
4001 Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*The Other Phone Company, LLC dba Access  
The Other Phone Company, LLC dba Access One  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*AT&T Corp.  
AT&T Corp.  
601 W Chestnut Street  
4th Floor East  
Louisville, KY 40203

\*US LEC of Tennessee, LLC dba PAETEC  
US LEC of Tennessee, LLC dba PAETEC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Windstream Communications, LLC  
Windstream Communications, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC dba A  
New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC dba AT&T  
1010 N St Mary's Street, 9th Floor  
San Antonio, TX 78215

\*Windstream Kentucky West, LLC  
Windstream Kentucky West, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Windstream KDL, LLC  
Windstream KDL, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*PAETEC Communications, LLC  
PAETEC Communications, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Windstream NTI, LLC  
Windstream NTI, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Windstream Kentucky East, LLC  
Windstream Kentucky East, LLC  
4001 N Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

\*Campus Communications Group, Inc.  
Campus Communications Group, Inc.  
206 North Randolph Street, Suite 200  
Champaign, IL 61820