



March 26, 2020

To: Minnesota Telephone Service Providers

Re: Service Provider Response to the Outbreak of COVID-19

On March 13, 2020, Governor Walz issued Emergency Executive Order 20-01, declaring a peacetime emergency to protect Minnesotans from the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in the United States that has spread to the State of Minnesota.

Many providers are already taking steps to suspend disconnections, to arrange payment plans, waive fees for reconnection or late payments, waive usage caps, and help their customers. We applaud these proactive and very important measures.

Your response to help Minnesotans is critical to the health and well-being of Minnesotans. During this time of uncertainty, Minnesotans are seeking the assurance that the measures you have taken thus far will extend throughout the peacetime emergency. The Department of Commerce and Public Utilities Commission are requesting your commitment that Minnesotans will not have to worry about their telephone connection during this time. Therefore, we request your company work with affected customers and communities by undertaking – at minimum – the following voluntary actions for the duration of the national security or peacetime emergency, consistent with the FCC’s “Keep America Connected Pledge”:

- I. Not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic
- II. Waive any late fees that any residential or small business customer incurs because of the economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic.
- III. Open its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them.

In addition, we are seeking that telephone service providers take the following voluntary actions:

- IV. Suspend data usage limits due to COVID-19.
- V. Ensure traffic flows smoothly across your network, regardless of increased demand.

We also ask that you work to ensure that customer services representatives (CSRs) are aware of the low income assistance programs available to Minnesota customers, including the federal Lifeline Program and the State Telephone Assistance Plan, and that the CSRs communicate this information to consumers that may be eligible, including customers that indicate they are unable to pay their bill, or call to terminate service.

Thank you for your commitment to keep Minnesotans safe during these unprecedented times. In order to provide government officials and Minnesotans with accurate information on the voluntary steps your company is taking during this emergency, please eFile your responses to these specific requests in Docket P999/CI-20-374 by April 3. We recognize that providing critical services during this unprecedented crisis should remain your top priority. If eFiling your response poses an unmanageable burden in the short term, please share your response in the most efficient way possible, for example by email, or through your trade association(s) to Greg Doyle, Department of Commerce greg.doyle@state.mn.us and/or Will Seuffert, Public Utilities Commission will.seuffert@state.mn.us.

We appreciate your voluntary cooperation as we work together to keep Minnesotans safe during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,



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Katie Sieben, Chair
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