

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**Communications Division
Consumer Programs Branch**

**Resolution T- 17820
August 22, 2024**

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION T- 17820 Approval of Modifications to the Universal LifeLine Telephone Service Trust Administrative Committee's (ULTSAC) Charter to Replace and Add Members to Better Serve the Program's Goals.

SUMMARY

This Resolution modifies Article 3.1 of the Universal LifeLine Telephone Service Trust Administrative Committee¹ (ULTSAC) Charter, also known as the California LifeLine Administrative Committee, by adjusting the composition of the ULTSAC to better reflect the program and community needs.

This Resolution combines the two large and small incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC) positions into one ILEC position and adds one more wireless carrier position. Additionally, this Resolution replaces one community-based organization (CBO) and one consumer position with one tribal advisor position and one broader state agency position.

BACKGROUND

According to Public Utilities (PU) Code § 277(a), ULTSAC is "an advisory board to advise the commission regarding the development, implementation, and administration of the program to ensure lifeline telephone service is available to the people of the state, as provided by the Moore Universal Telephone Service Act, PU Code § 871 et seq., and to carry out the program pursuant to the Commission's direction, control and approval." The ULTSAC Charter, Section 3.1 states:

The ULTSAC shall be composed of eleven (11) members

¹ The program is officially referred to as the Universal LifeLine Telephone Service Trust Fund Administrative Committee under Public Utilities Code 277 but is commonly known as the California LifeLine Program.

consisting of the following representatives: a large or mid-sized local exchange carrier (LEC); a small LEC; an inter-exchange carrier, competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC); a wireless carrier; two consumer organizations, each of whom represents a different constituency, based on geographic or economic criteria, on language, or on other criteria which reasonably influence lack of access to basic telephone service - or one consumer organization and a state agency with universal service expertise; three community based organizations (CBOs), each of whom represents a different constituency, based upon geographic or economic criteria, on language, or other criteria which reasonably influence lack of access to basic telephone service; an individual or organization representing the interests of either the deaf/hearing impaired or disabled users of the ULTS program; the Commission's Office of Ratepayer Advocates.²

Staff recommends changes to the Charter to align with the evolving California LifeLine marketplace and consumer needs. Additionally, these modifications aim to encourage active participation by the ULTSAC board in achieving the Charter's goals.

DISCUSSION

1. One New Wireless Representative

In Decision 14-01-036, the Commission expanded the California LifeLine Program to include wireless services. Over the past decade, wireless service providers have grown to serve over 89% of California LifeLine's 1.3 million participants, while wireline participation has steadily declined year over year.

Currently, there are three wireline board positions, and only one wireless board position. Staff find it reasonable to reduce the number of wireline board positions to two and increase the number of wireless board positions to two to better reflect the communications marketplace and meet the needs of program participants.

² See Resolution T-17574, Section 3.1, available here:
<https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M212/K431/212431622.PDF>.

2. One New Tribal Advisor Representative and One New State Agency Representative

One of the main program goals is to reach underserved and unserved communities. Despite wireless providers serving tribal communities, their participation in the program remains low. Adding a tribal advisor representative on the board would be invaluable in better meeting the needs of tribal communities and providing guidance on further outreach and engagement efforts.

Additionally, staff recommends adding a representative from a sister agency to the ULTSAC. Staff is currently working with the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to increase program eligibility through automated Medi-Cal database matching. Staff is also partnering with sister agencies such as CalFresh, which has increased eligibility and recertification rates through database matching.³

Most recently, in Decision 24-05-003, the Commission expanded the LifeLine Program to provide communications services to California's foster youth. Staff is collaborating with the California Department of Social Services (DHSS) to serve foster youth.

Currently, out of the eleven board positions, only nine are filled.⁴ Routinely, three to four of the filled positions, including CBO positions, have been absent from meetings over the last two years. Despite efforts from committee members and staff to reach out to inactive members during this time, no progress has been made. Therefore, staff recommends replacing one CBO and one consumer position with one tribal advisor position and one broader state agency position.

For the above reasons, staff finds that the proposed changes to the Charter are reasonable and recommends their adoption by the Commission. The changes to the Charter are redlined and attached as Attachment A.

³ Third-Party Administrator Meeting Report for Consumer Advocates, April 10, 2024.

⁴ To fill vacant positions, staff developed a [CPUC Event Flyer](#), distributed to the Lifeline program service list, and posted the flyer on the CPUC website. As of date, there are no prospects for filling these open positions.

SAFETY ISSUES

Carriers that provide the California LifeLine services are required to adhere to all Commission rules, decisions, General Orders, and statutes, including PU Code § 451, to take all actions... “necessary to promote the safety, health, comfort, and convenience of its patrons, employees, and the public.” The California LifeLine Program helps to promote universal service by subsidizing essential communications links to low-income and at-risk individuals throughout California.

The California LifeLine Program provides the participants with access to 211 for essential community services, 311 for non-emergency municipal services, 511 for traffic and transportation information, 711 for relay services, 811 for public infrastructure underground location information, and 911 to reach police, fire and emergency medical responders when fire, natural disasters, medical emergencies, or other crises occur.

COMMENTS:

In compliance with PU Code § 311 (g), the Commission e-mailed on a notice letter on 07/22/2024 informing members of the ULTSAC and the parties of records in R. 20-02-008 of the availability of this draft Resolution for comments, as well as the availability of the final Resolution, if adopted by the Commission, on the Commission website at www.cpuc.ca.gov. The Commission did not receive any public comments.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

1. Pursuant to PU Code § 277(a), the ULTSAC is an advisory board to advise the Commission regarding the development, implementation, and administration of the California LifeLine Program, to ensure lifeline telephone service is available to the people of the state, as provided by the Moore Universal Telephone Service Act, and to carry out program under the Commission’s direction, control and approval.
2. It is reasonable to combine both large and small incumbent local exchange carriers (ILEC) positions into one ILEC position.

3. With 89% of all California LifeLine participants being wireless users, it is reasonable to add an additional wireless position.
4. To balance the representation of service providers and community organizations, it is reasonable to remove one CBO and one consumer position.
5. Working with CalFresh, DHSS and DHCS has increased program eligibility and renewal rates significantly.
6. It is reasonable to add a sister agency position for further advancement and program outreach.
7. Program participation of tribal communities has been underserved; therefore, it is reasonable to add one tribal advisor position.

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Universal LifeLine Telephone Service Trust Administrative Committee Charter, Section 3.1, should be modified to read:

“The ULTSAC shall be composed of eleven (11) members consisting of the following representatives: an incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC); an inter-exchange carrier or a competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC); two wireless carriers; one consumer organization which reasonably influences lack of access to basic telephone service; two community-based organizations (CBOs), each of whom represents a different constituency, based upon geographic or economic criteria, on language, or other criteria which reasonably influence lack of access to basic telephone service; a state agency with universal service expertise; an individual or organization representing the interests of either the deaf/hearing impaired or disabled users of the ULTS program; the Commission’s Office of the Tribal Advisor; the Commission’s Office of Ratepayer Advocates.”

I certify that the foregoing resolution was duly introduced, passed, and adopted at a meeting of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of California held on August 22, 2024, the following Commissioners voting favorable thereon:

/s/ RACHEL PETERSON

Rachel Peterson

Executive Director

ALICE REYNOLDS

President

DARCIE L. HOUCK

JOHN REYNOLDS

KAREN DOUGLAS

MATTHEW BAKER

Commissioners

APPENDIX A

CHARTER

of the

UNIVERSAL LIFELINE TELEPHONE SERVICE TRUST ADMINISTRATIVE

COMMITTEE

1. ARTICLE ONE: NAME

1.1 Name. The name of this advisory board shall be the Universal Lifeline Telephone Service Trust Administrative Committee (ULTSAC or Committee).

2. ARTICLE TWO: PURPOSE

2.1 Purpose of the Committee. The purpose of the ULTSAC is to function, pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 277(a), as an advisory board to advise the Commission regarding the development, implementation, and administration of the Universal Lifeline Telephone Service Trust (ULTS) program to ensure lifeline telephone service is available to the people of the state, as provided by the Moore Universal Telephone Service Act, Pub. Util. Code § 871 et seq., and to carry out program under the Commission's direction, control and approval.

2.2 Description of ULTS Program. The ULTS program provides subsidized basic telephone service to qualifying residential subscribers pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 871 et seq. Under the ULTS program, a ULTS customer may select any

carrier from those that provide residential local exchange service in the customer's area.⁵ The selected carrier may then submit a claim for reimbursement from the ULTS program. The ULTS program is funded by a surcharge, as determined by the CPUC, on the end of the user's bill for intrastate telecommunications services. The purpose of the ULTS program is related to, but distinct from, the Commission's overall goal of a 95% subscriber rate for each residential customer group. The ULTS program is intended to provide affordable basic telephone service to all low-income households regardless of whether or not a particular low-income household belongs to a customer group with a 95% subscriber rate. Success by the ULTS program in providing telephone service to low-income households shall, in turn, help achieve the overall goal of a 95% subscriber rate for all residential customer groups.

2.3 Annual Report. The ULTSAC's advice and recommendations to the Commission shall focus on achieving the ULTS program goal of providing basic telephone service to all qualifying low-income households. The ULTSAC may make recommendations in its Annual Report to the Commission on the following ULTS issues: (1) how to use existing funding levels for the ULTS marketing program to reduce the total number of households that qualify for ULTS that are without phone service and (2) how to narrow the gap between the total number of households with phone service who qualify for the ULTS program and the total number of such customers who actually use the program.

3. ARTICLE THREE: MEMBERSHIP

⁵ Carriers providing residential local exchange service are designated according to the rules adopted in D.95-07-050.

- 3.1 Members. The ULTSAC shall be composed of eleven (11) members consisting of the following representatives: ~~a large or mid-sized~~ an incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC); ~~a small LEC;~~ an inter-exchange carrier or a competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC); ~~a two~~ two wireless carriers; ~~two one~~ consumer organizations, ~~each of whom represents a different constituency, based on geographic or economic criteria, on language, or on other criteria~~ which reasonably influences lack of access to basic telephone service ~~—or one consumer organization and a state agency with universal service expertise;~~ ~~three~~ two community based organizations (CBOs), each of whom represents a different constituency, based upon geographic or economic criteria, on language, or other criteria which reasonably influence lack of access to basic telephone service; a state agency with universal service expertise; an individual or organization representing the interests of either the deaf/hearing impaired or disabled users of the ULTS program; the Commission's Office of the Tribal Advisor; the Commission's Office of Ratepayer Advocates⁶.
- 3.2 Selection. Upon the establishment by the Commission of the number and qualifications of members of the ULTSAC pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 271(a), members and alternates shall be nominated by the organizations or constituencies they are to represent. The Commission's Executive Director shall select and approve members and alternates, in accordance with procedures adopted by the Executive Director.
- 3.3 Term of Appointment. A member shall hold office until a successor has been appointed and has assumed office or until the member has been removed in

⁶ See Resolution T-17574, Section 3.1. available here:
<https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M212/K431/212431622.PDF>

accordance with Paragraph 3.4 or has resigned in accordance with Paragraph 3.5. If for any reason, a member ceases to be a designated representative of the respective class or entity upon which his or her membership is based, the member's appointment shall terminate as of the date that affiliation ceases.

3.4 Removal. Any member may be removed at any time by the Commission or the

3.5 Executive Director, in accordance with procedures adopted by the Commission. A majority of the ULTSAC members may recommend removal of a member upon demonstration of reasonable cause, provided, however, that reasonable cause may not include any policy position taken by a member as a member of the Committee. The Commission must approve the Committee's recommendation to remove any member.

3.6 Resignation. Any member may resign upon giving thirty (30) days written notice to the then acting Chair of the Committee. The member's appointment shall terminate upon the expiration of the thirty (30) day notification period.

3.7 Vacancies. The organizations or constituencies whose seat is vacated shall nominate individuals to fill that vacancy, and the selection and approval of the individual to fill that vacancy shall be made by the Commission's Executive Director. If the Committee is unable to identify a suitable candidate to fill the vacancy for any reason, the Commission or the Executive Director may appoint a member of the class from which the vacancy occurs.

3.8 Indemnification. Members of the ULTSAC who are not Commission staff are uncompensated servants of the State of California within the meaning of Gov. Code §810.2. Accordingly, the State will indemnify Committee members as it indemnifies its compensated employees and will provide them with representation for their acts done within the course and scope of the services they perform for the ULTSAC, pursuant to Gov. Code §§ 815 -825.6 and 995 - 996.6.

- 3.9 Expenses and Per Diem. Members of the ULTSAC who are not employees of utilities, the Commission, or other governmental agencies of the State of California shall be entitled to reimbursement from the Committee Fund of reasonable expenses and/or per diem incurred in connection with their service on the Committee or subcommittees of the Committee authorized by the Commission, in accordance with Pub. Util. Code § 271(f). The per diem shall be \$300 for each day of meetings attended by the eligible members or \$200 if the meeting lasts for less than approximately two hours.

There shall be no per diem for preparation work. For each ULTSAC member who is an employee of a non-State governmental agency, trade association, or consumer group, payments for per diem and expense reimbursement related to the member's participation in the ULTSAC shall go to the member's employer unless the member can show justification for receiving these monies directly. Eligible Committee members must seek reimbursement of travel expenses and per diem through the state's Travel Expense Claim (TEC) process. Completed TECs must be submitted to the Commission's Communications Division for review. The Director of the Communications Division will assign a designated staff member to review, and if appropriate, approve payment.

Committee members shall not be eligible to receive intervenor compensation under Pub. Util. Code § 1801 et seq. for their work related to the ULTSAC.

4. ARTICLE FOUR: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Duties. The ULTSAC shall have the following duties and responsibilities.

While performing these duties and responsibilities, Committee members at all

times shall be subject to the direction, control and approval of the Commission, which shall have all policy and program decision-making authority. The Committee shall act in an advisory capacity to the Commission.

- a) Pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 273(a), on or before March 31 of each year the ULTSAC shall submit a proposed budget to the Commission's Communications Division. The proposed budget shall include estimated program expenditures and the Committee's projected expenses for the fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) that will commence the following fiscal year thereafter.
- b) Pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 273(b), on or before October 1 of each year the ULTSAC shall submit a report to the Commission describing Committee activities during the prior fiscal year.
- c) Pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 277(a), the ULTSAC shall advise the Commission regarding the development, implementation and
- d) administration of the ULTS program, within the context of the Committee's purpose, as described in Paragraph 2.1.

4.2 Administrative, Legal and other Assistance: The Commission shall assign four Commission staff as liaisons to the ULTS-AC for the purposes of providing administrative, legal and other assistance. These liaisons shall not be members of the Committee and shall have no vote.

- a) One liaison, from the Commission's Communications Division, or its successor, who shall be appointed by the Director of that division, shall facilitate advisory board meetings by scheduling the room for such meetings, preparing agendas and meeting information packages,

and taking and preparing minutes of the meetings. The liaison shall also assist the Committee in the development of each proposed fiscal year program budget and in the preparation and filing of the annual report.

- b) One liaison, from the Commission's Information and Management Services Division, or its successor, who shall be appointed by the Director of that division, shall provide the Committee with monthly reports on the financial status of the program.
- c) One liaison, from the Commission's Legal Division, or its successor, who shall be appointed by the Commission's General Counsel, shall provide the Committee with legal advice, upon request.
- d) One liaison, from the Commission's Public Advisor's Office, or its successor, who shall be appointed by the Public Advisor, shall facilitate communication between the board and the public, generally, including any necessary or useful public outreach consistent with the board's purpose. The liaison shall ensure that the board is aware of any specific, program-related concerns or proposals, including those regarding the effectiveness of the programs, which have come to the Commission's attention and shall undertake any other tasks to assist the board in fulfilling its purpose as the Commission may formally or informally direct.

4.3 Conflict of Interest Rules. Until affirmed as the final rules or modified by Commission order, the ULTSAC shall comply with the Fair Political Practices Commission Conflict of Interest Code, 2 Cal. Code of Regulations, § 18730. For

purposes of applying these rules, all members of the ULTSAC shall be defined as “designated employees” required to disclose the following “economic interests”:

Any investment or business position in, or income from, any of the following:

1. An entity seeking to provide any product or service related to the Committee’s function or that has plans to come before the Committee to seek funds from the monies under the control of this group.
2. A parent or a subsidiary of an entity described in subsection (1).

5. ARTICLE FIVE: MEETINGS AND RECORDS

5.1 General. The ULTSAC shall act only in the course of a duly noticed meeting.

The Committee shall meet at least quarterly. Notification of the date, place, and time of each meeting shall be given to each member and shall be published as required by the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Gov. Code §11120 et seq.) and in the Commission’s Daily Calendar at least ten (10) calendar days in advance of the meeting. Unless another location is stated in the notice, meetings shall be at the Public Utilities Commission Building in San Francisco. Notice shall include the name, address, and telephone number of a person who can provide additional information prior to the meeting, as well as a brief, general description of the business to be transacted and shall highlight important pending decisions, including those to be sent to the Commission for approval. The agenda, once published, shall not be revised ten (10) days prior to the meeting. The Committee may take action on an item of business not appearing on the published agenda, as long as the action is taken in accordance with Gov. Code § 11125.

5.2 Open Meetings. All meetings shall be open to the public and shall be held in accordance with the provisions of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act. A copy of the Act shall be given to every existing and new member of the

Committee.

5.3 Quorum and Teleconferencing. A majority of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The members may be present in person or by conference telephone to the extent consistent with state law regarding open meetings, so long as the place of the meeting is open to attendance by the public and so long as the meeting is conducted in a way that is consistent with the following requirements of Gov. Code § 11123:

- a) All meetings of a state body shall be open and public and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of a state body except as otherwise provided in this [Part 1, Chapter 1, Article 9 of the Government Code].
- b) Nothing in Part 1, Chapter 1, Article 9 of the Government Code shall be construed to prohibit a state body from holding an open or closed meeting by teleconference if the convening at one location of a quorum of the state body is difficult or impossible, subject to all of the following:
 - (A) The teleconferencing meeting shall comply with all requirements of this article applicable to other meetings.
 - (B) The portion of the teleconference meeting that is required to be open to the public shall be audible to the public at the location specified in the notice of the meeting.
 - (C) Each teleconference location shall be identified in the notice of the meeting and shall be accessible to the public.
 - (D) All votes taken during a teleconference meeting shall be by rollcall.
 - (E) The portion of the teleconference meeting that is closed to the public

may not include the consideration of any agenda item being heard pursuant to Government Code §11125.5.

- (F) At least one member of the state body be physically present at the location specified in the Notice of the meeting.

- 5.4 Committee Decisions. Each member present shall have one (1) vote. Decisions shall be made by majority vote of those members present as long as a quorum is present at the time of the vote.
- 5.5 Authorization of Specified Alternates. The Executive Director may appoint an alternate, from the same interest group or constituency as each member (but who need not be a representative of the same entity or organization), who may attend an advisory board meeting and vote in lieu of a member who cannot attend. No other alternate, substitute or proxy representation of Committee members may occur.
- 5.6 Public Participation. The ULTSAC shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the Committee directly on each agenda item before or during the Committee's discussion or consideration of the item. The Committee shall provide a sign- up sheet for members of the public who wish to address the Committee. The sign-up sheet shall be available prior to the commencement of the public meeting and shall provide space for the name of the member of the public wishing to address the Committee, whom the individual represents, and the agenda item to be addressed. The Committee shall make its best efforts to recognize the public members during the appropriate comment periods at each meeting, consistent with the Committee's obligation to conduct business in an orderly manner.

Records. As provided in Paragraph 4.2 (a), the Communications Division liaison shall record and prepare written minutes of ULTSAC meetings. The Communication Division liaison assigned to the task of preparing the written minutes shall submit them to the Committee at its next meeting for review and approval. Written minutes shall:

(a) identify the date, time, and place of the meeting; (b) identify the Committee members in attendance, and (c) contain a summary. Copies of the minutes shall be provided to the Commission or any interested party upon request.

5.7 Copies. Copies of the Committee's public documents that are subject to the Public Records Act may be requested from the Committee and the Committee shall provide them within a reasonable time.

6. ARTICLE SIX: OFFICERS

6.1 Two Officers. The ULTSAC shall have two (2) officers, a Chair and a Vice-Chair, both of whom shall be members of the Committee. The officers shall be elected by the members of the Committee to serve a term of one year, and they may be re-elected. An officer shall continue to hold office until a successor has been elected and assumed office. However, if an officer ceases to be the designated representative of a class or entity as described in Paragraph 3.3, the officer's appointment shall terminate upon the date that the officer's affiliation ceases.

6.2 Duties. The Chair shall be the executive officer and shall be responsible for the general supervision and direction of the affairs of the Committee. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Committee. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall perform the duties of that office. If the Chair and Vice-Chair are unavailable for a meeting where a quorum nevertheless exists, the Chair may appoint a temporary Chair for that meeting. The officers shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be prescribed by the Committee,

with the assistance of the Communications Division liaison, as needed.

7. ARTICLE SEVEN: EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENTS

- 7.1 Effective Date. This Charter shall become effective on the date it is approved by the Commission unless the Commission establishes a different effective date.

Amendments. This Charter may be amended by vote of the majority of the members of the ULTSAC and the amendment shall be submitted to the Commission for approval. No amendment shall be effective unless and until the amendment has been approved by the Commission. This Charter is subject to amendment, termination or

- 7.2 Copies. Copies of the Committee's public documents that are subject to the Public Records Act may be requested from the Committee and the Committee shall provide them within a reasonable time.

8. ARTICLE SEVEN: EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENTS

- 8.1 Effective Date. This Charter shall become effective on the date it is approved by the Commission unless the Commission establishes a different effective date.

- 8.2 Amendments. This Charter may be amended by vote of the majority of the members of the ULTSAC and the amendment shall be submitted to the Commission for approval. No amendment shall be effective unless and until the amendment has been approved by the Commission. This Charter is subject to amendment, termination or revocation at any time by order of the Commission.

9. ARTICLE EIGHT: LIMITATION ON POWER AND AUTHORITY

- 9.1 While the ULTSAC shall have the power and authority to function consistent with this Charter, and in particular, to carry out the duties and responsibilities specified in Article Four of this Charter, it shall not have the authority to direct telecommunications carriers to act or refrain from acting. Such authority shall remain solely with the Commission.
- 9.2 The members of the ULTSAC in the performance of their duties and in the actions taken by the Committee shall at all times be subject to the direction, control and approval of the Commission.