

THE NAVAJO NATION



JONATHAN NEZ | PRESIDENT MYRON LIZER | VICE PRESIDENT

March 27, 2020

Ajit, Pai, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20554

Re: COVID-19 Emergency

Dear Chairman Pai:

As a result of the COVID-19 emergency, and consistent with the best advice from medical professionals and infectious disease specialists, on March 20, 2020, the Navajo Department of Health declared a public health emergency which, among other things, stated, "Navajo Nation citizens are required to stay home and undertake only those outings absolutely necessary for their health, safety, or welfare...."¹ Our public health and safety officials are doing everything in their power to minimize non-essential travel and public gatherings. We have ordered all non-essential businesses to close and are imposing social distancing requirements on those remaining open.

On behalf of the Navajo Nation, I write to request your assistance in meeting the needs of our citizens during this critical time.

As you know, tens of thousands of Navajo citizens participate in the federal Lifeline program. Many, if not most, are connected to the Internet solely through Lifeline. With our shelter-in-place order, our low-income population depends on Lifeline more than ever. Accordingly, we request three actions to assist our citizens.

First, while I commend carriers serving our nation for signing the Keep Americans Connected Pledge and increasing the amount of data available to Lifeline subscribers, our citizens need more, particularly students using distance learning applications. Until the crisis passes, please increase the amount of Lifeline support available to carriers serving Tribal lands. This will enable them to provide significantly more data to our citizens during this difficult time.

Second, please temporarily suspend any FCC Lifeline requirements that would cause our citizens to travel to storefronts (many of which are already closed) to pay for service or present documentation of Lifeline eligibility. For many of our citizens who operate solely with cash, this is a critical element in reducing community transmission.

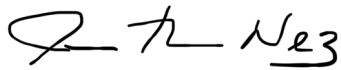
¹ See, http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/Portals/0/FILES/PRESS%20RELEASES/2020/Mar/NDOH%20Public%20Health%20Emergency%20Order%202020-003%20Dikos%20Tsaagii-19_opt.pdf.

Third, please suspend the “one-per-household” requirement, to ensure that our low-income citizens have the capability to communicate with health care providers, educational institutions, and the outside world generally.

Separately, I inform you that the Navajo Nation has taken emergency action to expedite the process for FirstNet and other critical wireless telecommunications to assist first responders during the COVID-19 pandemic by temporarily suspending the Nation’s standard regulatory processes. It is our intent to accelerate construction of FirstNet to the greatest extent possible.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these critical issues. Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please call me directly.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Nez". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a cursive "Nez".

Jonathan Nez, *President*
THE NAVAJO NATION

cc: Hon. Michael O’Rielly
Hon. Brendan Carr
Hon. Jessica Rosenworcel
Hon. Geoffrey Starks