



For Immediate Release: 03/19/20

John B. Rhodes, Chair

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20032 / 19-C-0363

Commission Approves Wireless Phone Company to Provide Lifeline Services

TruConnect Will Provide Discounted Voice and Internet Services to Low-Income Customers

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved Sage Telecom Communications' request to be allowed to provide cell phone service to low-income customers in New York State under the federal Lifeline service program. The company, which does business as TruConnect, sought Commission designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) to receive federal universal service support for offering Lifeline Service. Consistent with promoting and ensuring that all residents have access to affordable basic telephone service, the FCC's Lifeline Program offers federally discounted service to qualifying low-income consumers.

"TruConnect will provide the requisite telephone services and satisfies all the requirements needed to be allowed to receive federal support to provide Lifeline service to low-income customers," **said Commission Chair John B. Rhodes.** "With this decision, TruConnect will provide another choice for discounted basic service to meet the needs of New York's Lifeline-eligible consumers. In addition, as TruConnect offers mobile broadband services, many Lifeline-eligible customers will have the opportunity to receive more advanced telecommunications services."

In New York, the Commission did not previously approve wireless ETC designation requests without prior FCC action. However, a recently enacted law allows it to designate commercial cellular telephone service providers as ETCs for purposes of providing Lifeline services without FCC action. As a result, TruConnect became the first wireless company to be designated an ETC without prior FCC action.

TruConnect provides prepaid wireless telecommunications services to consumers. It is currently designated as a wireless ETC in 26 states and Puerto Rico and has applications for ETC designation pending with the FCC and with state public utility commissions in Mississippi, New Mexico, and Washington. TruConnect states that it anticipates, given its pricing and marketing strategy and the demographics of its customers in other states, that many of its customers will be from low-income backgrounds who have not previously had access to wireless service.

TruConnect acknowledges that its service area overlaps with rural carriers in New York, but states that the FCC's Lifeline program authorizes rural service with respect to carriers seeking to provide Lifeline-only service.

TruConnect commits that its Lifeline-supported voice services will meet or exceed the minimum service standards set forth by the FCC, including as such standards are updated going forward.

Further, TruConnect states that its Lifeline-supported broadband services will meet the FCC's minimum service standards for mobile broadband Internet access services, including for service speed and data usage allowance, as such standards are updated going forward.

The Commission determined that TruConnect will provide the requisite telephone services and satisfies all of the FCC and State requirements for designation as an ETC for the purpose of receiving federal universal service support for the provision of Lifeline service and granting Lifeline-only ETC designation to TruConnect will serve the public interest.

As an ETC, TruConnect will provide another choice for discounted basic service to meet the needs of New York's Lifeline-eligible consumers. In addition, since TruConnect offers mobile broadband services, many Lifeline-eligible customers will have the opportunity to receive more advanced telecommunications services than those currently available from other companies.

Today's decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 19-C-0363 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.