

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 6, 2013

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

We write to express our deep concern with the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Lifeline program, which is paid for by American telecommunications consumers. This program has become symbolic of the mismanagement of the Universal Service Fund, and the Lifeline program's beneficiaries admit the program is plagued by waste, fraud, and abuse.

Law enforcement officials have indicated that Lifeline phones are often found at crime scenes and are used in drug deals. Earlier this month, in a hearing before the House Energy and Commerce Committee, we learned from an expert witness that the number of recipients of free phones in Maryland was nearly twice the number that should be eligible. Furthermore, the *Boston Herald* has reported that the FCC, citing privacy laws, will not say whether the Tsarnaev brothers, the alleged Boston Marathon bombers, had a government-paid cell phone – despite reports that members of the Tsarnaev family, including the suspects and their parents, benefitted from taxpayer-funded assistance.

As investigators continue to look into the benefits received by the Tsarnaev family, we request that the FCC state whether members of the Tsarnaev family received benefits from the Lifeline program. Since millions of law-abiding American consumers pay for the program through a surcharge on their phone bill, the public has a right to know whether Lifeline benefits were received by the alleged Boston Marathon bombers.

We also are deeply concerned that the FCC has yet to stand up an eligibility database to root out ineligible participants. Ratepayers deserve to know that the money they pay to support Lifeline is spent wisely and not being used for illicit purposes. If the FCC isn't able to conclusively state whether the alleged Boston Marathon bombers received Lifeline benefits, we believe the program should be frozen until there are mechanisms in place to do so. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Representative Marsha Blackburn

  
Representative Tim Griffin