April 14, 2020

Hans Vestberg, Chairman & CEO
Verizon Communications
One Verizon Way
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

RE: Request for Consumer Relief

Dear Mr. Vestberg:

We are writing today to urge you to provide cost relief to residential customers, small businesses, and schools. Specifically, we are urging you to provide one month of free internet service and a 20% discount on internet service for 60 days afterwards for residential customers, small businesses, and schools. As you all are well aware, we are currently experiencing a public health crisis that is unprecedented. Many families, students, and workers are needing or depending on reliable internet service in order to stay connected, learn, work, and for other reasons while staying at home. We appreciate all the actions that you have taken so far to assist your customers and account for their needs, but due to the severe social and economic impacts of COVID-19, we are requesting that you take a step further and provide your customers with the aforementioned cost relief.

As the spread of COVID-19 upends every aspects of society, many people are relying on internet service and technology to meet their needs. Research shows that internet usage increased significantly in March when COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic. Specifically, the daily average in-home data usage increased by 38 percent to 16.6 gigabytes, which is up from 12 gigabytes in March 2019. This is expected because many people are self-isolating, practicing physical distancing, and using the internet to stay up-to-date with the news, do schoolwork, work from home, stream entertainment, and more. As people adapt to a new normal, having internet service is very essential. However, not everyone is able to afford internet service during this challenging time.

Currently, a lot of people are struggling financially due to the economic disruptions of COVID-19. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the unemployment rate rose to 4.4 percent and that 7.1 million people were unemployed in March. Whether due to job loss, a reduction in scheduled hours, or decreased revenues, many people are struggling to pay all of their bills, which may include rent, utilities, loans, and other expenses. As a result, a lot of individuals and families are turning to public assistance in order to make ends meet. In fact, a record breaking 6.6 million people applied for unemployment benefits at the end of March. Because of financial hardships, not everybody can afford internet service at this time. This is problematic because
internet service is a necessity during this crisis, and therefore, it is imperative that everybody has access to affordable and reliable internet service.

Since the pandemic is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, it is critical that we all step up, show compassion, and offer a helping hand to those in need. Therefore, we are respectfully requesting that you take action to further help residential customers, small businesses, and schools by providing them with one month of free internet service and a 20% discount on internet service for 60 days afterwards. Doing so will provide much needed financial relief to your customers while also ensuring that they have reliable internet service to meet their various needs while staying at home. We are looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,

KANSEN CHU
Assemblymember, 25th District

MIGUEL SANTIAGO
Assemblymember, 53rd District