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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRC proposes rules for broadband affordability program

Initiative aims to lower internet bills for New Mexico households

SANTA FE – More than 20,000 households could soon see lower broadband bills as the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) begins the rulemaking process for a new statewide affordability initiative spearheaded by the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE).

Established through Senate Bill 152 which was signed into law earlier this year, the Low-Income Telecommunications Assistance Program (LITAP) is designed to make high-speed internet more affordable for low-income families across the state.

Beginning in December, eligible customers will be able to apply for monthly broadband discounts of up to $30, and up to $70 for homes on Tribal lands. LITAP is expected to benefit about 27,000 households in its first year, helping New Mexicans stay connected to essential services such as education, telehealth, workforce training and public safety.

“This program will help address affordability challenges faced by New Mexico families,” said **OBAE Director Jeff Lopez.** “I am confident that come December 1, low-income families will have a new resource to ensure their household stays connected to all the critical services that broadband provides including education, healthcare, and workforce training. Our mission is more than expanding broadband – we want to make this vital infrastructure affordable to all New Mexicans.”

To support the launch of the new program, the NMPRC has proposed rules detailing how high-speed internet discounts will reach low-income, unserved, and underserved communities. Under the proposed rules, state-approved internet providers will inform customers about available discounts and verify their income eligibility through a federal database. Once confirmed, providers apply the savings directly to the customer's bill and seek reimbursement from the State Rural Universal Service Fund (SRUSF), a program designed to ensure that all residents, particularly those in rural, insular, and high-cost areas, have access to affordable telecommunications and broadband services.

“High-speed internet is a fundamental part of modern infrastructure,” said **Commissioner Patrick O’Connell.** “It’s essential for public health, safety, and everyday life. Through this rulemaking, the Public Regulation Commission is putting Senate Bill 152’s access and affordability provisions into action.”

Members of the public and key stakeholders are invited to review the proposed rules and share their feedback. Written comments may be submitted through September 11, with reply comments accepted until September 21. All public input will play a vital role in shaping the final rules for how the program is administered. OBAE will also submit its recommendations ahead of the designated deadlines.

Additionally, the NMPRC will hold a public comment hearing on the proposed changes and any suggested alternatives at 1 p.m. on October 1 in Pecos Hall at the Wendell Chino Building in Santa Fe.

The new program is backed by $10 million in its first year from the SRUSF, with the PRC able to authorize up to $45 million annually in following years. Over time, more than 100,000 households could benefit from the program.

With this initiative, New Mexico becomes the first state to create its own replacement for the discontinued federal Affordable Connectivity Program, which previously helped more than 180,000 New Mexicans afford broadband service before it ended in 2024.

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The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion is dedicated to serving New Mexico with a commitment to make high-speed broadband accessible to all New Mexicans. OBAE’s mission is to expand and improve high-speed internet service with passionate leadership that drives bold, equitable, affordable and inclusive broadband solutions. OBAE seeks results that honor the state’s rich heritage and elevate quality of life for all.

The New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (NMPRC) serves New Mexico by ensuring safe operations and reliable utility services at fair, just, and reasonable rates consistent with the State’s legal, economic, environmental, and social policies. To learn more about the work of the NMPRC, please visit www.prc.nm.gov.

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