

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 20, 2024

Alice Busching Reynolds
President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Ms. Reynolds:

On behalf of the constituents of the California Delegation, we raise serious concerns with AT&T's applications to be relieved of its Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligations and to remove its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) designation in areas of California. AT&T's application to cease landline service in our communities threatens public safety in an area plagued by earthquakes, severe storms, floods, and fires and that has a geography that often disrupts cellular service for days, if not weeks, at a time. During these times, residents are only able to contact emergency services and obtain emergency updates via their landlines. In fact, many of these areas do not have reliable cellular service on a good weather day, at best. If AT&T's petition is granted, we think an exception for residents who live in areas with unreliable cellular service, where they are prone to fires, earthquakes, flooding, and landslides is warranted.

Congress has repeatedly passed legislation seeking to address the worsening severity of natural disasters and their impact on our constituents. For example, in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Congress provided \$500 million for hazardous fuels mitigation; \$500 million for prescribed fires; \$500 million for communities to implement a community wildfire defense plan; \$5 billion for utilities to underground power lines, install fire-resistant technologies, and expand the use of microgrids; and \$3.5 billion for weatherization assistance to help homeowners make energy-efficient improvements that help fireproof their homes. Ensuring residents are able to communicate and reach emergency services during these natural disasters addresses the Congressional concern with mitigating the loss of life and property during these natural disasters that often require federal funds for remediation for the loss of property. There is no remediation possible for the loss of life.

CPUC's stated mission is to ensure Californians have safe, reliable utility services. We do not believe that removing access to landlines is compatible with this mission. When catastrophic earthquakes, destructive fires, cataclysmic landslides, or ravaging floods happen residents are left without the electricity or working cellular towers necessary for cellular phone usage for days and weeks at a time. These disasters are not figurative or future possibilities. They happen regularly in this area of the country.

For example, this year already hundreds of thousands of Californians who were without power due to the Pineapple Express weather system storms, floods, and landslides. The earthquake of 2022 left Californians without power for such an extended period of time, people were unable to charge their cellular phones. The only way to call for emergency services and stay in touch with the outside world was via neighbors that had landlines. What will happen if these landlines are removed? How will people call for emergency service in a disaster or in areas with poor cellular reception?

As of the morning of February 7, 2024, you had over 3,000 comments asking you to deny the petition. We think these comments are worth consideration when determining whether to deny AT&T's petition or to create an exception for residents who live in areas with unreliable cellular service, where they are prone to fires, earthquakes, flooding, and landslides.

As the CPUC considers AT&Ts proposal to discontinue lifesaving services, we think a clear-eyed analysis of the limitations of the cellular service in good conditions, and in the hilly and mountainous areas where disasters can cause prolonged power outages is necessary. We encourage you to fully and fairly consider the concerns from constituents in our districts about the impact the loss of land lines would have on the safety of our community.

Sincerely,



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



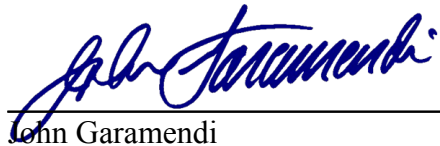
Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Katie Porter
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress




Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



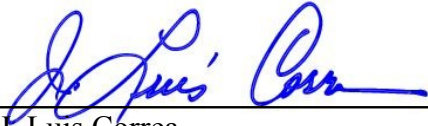
Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



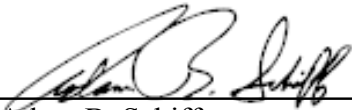
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



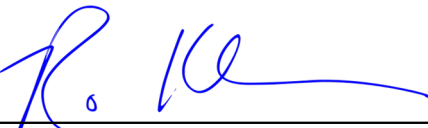
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress