STATE OF RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

IN RE: PETITION OF TRUCONNECT

COMMUNICATIONS, INC. FOR :

DESIGNATION AS AN ELIGIBLE : DOCKET NO. 5033

TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER :

IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND :

ORDER

On May 15, 2019, TruConnect Communications, Inc. (TruConnect or Company) filed with the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) a Petition for Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) throughout its service area in the State of Rhode Island pursuant to 47 U.S.C. Section 214(e)¹ in order to provide discounted service to low income customers and receive certain subsidies from the Federal Universal Service Fund (petition).²

This pre-paid wireless service provides non-tribal Lifeline customers with 1,000 voice minutes, unlimited text messages, and 3 GB of data per month, and Tribal Lifeline customers will receive unlimited voice minutes and text messages and 3 GB data per month, at a net cost of \$0.00 after application of Lifeline support. TruConnect's service also includes proprietary software (WeFi app) that allows smartphone mobile customers to search for an open WiFi network and connect to it automatically in order to save on their carrier data usage, enabling their data allotment to last longer. TruConnect stated that it has been allowed ETC status in several other states. TruConnect also indicated that it will

¹ 47 U.S.C. 214(e) imposed statutory responsibility upon the Commission to certify telecommunications service provides as "eligible" to receive funds from the Federal Universal Service Fund.

² By separate decision, on July 23, 2020, the PUC Commission approved TruConnect Communications, Inc.'s application for registration to provide telecommunications service in Rhode Island.

not be seeking high cost support.³ TruConnect will enroll customers using the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier as required by the Federal Communications Commission.⁴

On June 10, 2020, the Commission issued a Public Notice soliciting comments regarding the petition. No comments were received. On July 21, 2020, the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers filed a letter with the Commission recommending approval of the petition.

At an Open Meeting held on July 23, 2020, the Commission approved TruConnect petition finding TruConnect's petition for ETC designation solely for the purpose of providing Lifeline service to qualifying Rhode Island customers to be proper, in compliance with the federal and state requirements, and in the public interest.

Accordingly, it is hereby

(23869) ORDERED:

TruConnect Communications, Inc. is hereby designated as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier throughout its service area for receiving universal service support.

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³ Pet. at 6.

⁴ *Id*. at 7.

EFFECTIVE AT WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND ON JULY 23, 2020 PURSUANT TO AN OPEN MEETING DECISION. WRITTEN ORDER ISSUED ON JULY 29, 2020.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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Ronald T. Gerwatowski, Chairperson

Marion S. Gold, Commissioner

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Abigail Anthony, Commissioner

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NOTICE OF RIGHT OF APPEAL: Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-5-1, any person aggrieved by a decision or order of the PUC may, within seven days from the date of the order, petition the Supreme Court for a Writ of Certiorari to review the legality and reasonableness of the decision or order.