RE: Case A2303003 - Notice of Opposition: AT&T’s Application for Relief of COLR Obligation

Dear President Reynolds and Commissioners,

As a resident of the City of Hidden Hills, in the County of Los Angeles, I am writing to express my strong opposition to AT&T's petition for relief from its Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligations, and respectfully request that you reject their application.

Preserving access to reliable communication services is essential for the public’s safety and any decision regarding this matter should prioritize the interests and safety of Californians above all else. Granting AT&T relief from their obligation leaves already susceptible communities, like mine, more vulnerable and puts lives at risk.

My City, like many in the region, does not have adequate cell service due to our topography. Compounding the problem, my City’s internet services relies on very old infrastructure and has been very inconsistent over the years. Power and electricity is similarly down frequently, either due to planned outages, incidents, or natural disaster events. Even when power does return, internet is not always automatically restored.

In a state as prone to various disasters as California, maintaining robust telecommunications infrastructure is a necessity for safeguarding the well-being of its residents, especially as 30% of Californians still have landline service, as do most seniors.

I live in a Fire Hazard Severity Zone so I know that having available a hard-wired POTS lines is imperative in communicating with neighbors and first responders. Having experienced the 2018 Woolsey Fire that impacted the entire region and caused a citywide evacuation, first responders and neighbors relied on POTS access for 9-1-1 and 2-1-1 services to receive alerts and notifications. It played a critical role in communicating with neighbors (many of whom are elderly and/or own horses and livestock).

So essential is POTS to my community, that it’s part of my City's Emergency Operation Plan. Our Sheriff is also passionate about the need to retain landlines to save lives during a wildfire, earthquake, landslide, mud/earth movement event, other natural disaster. To lose the service now would be catastrophic, especially in the unfortunate event we see another natural disaster and/or evacuation event.

Even if I received cell service at home, there have been many instances when cellular coverage suddenly goes down with no notice. Just look at the recent situation on February 22, 2024, when millions of AT&T customers nationwide lost service due to an unplanned outage affecting emergency services in multiple states. Only those with access to landlines were able to get through to 911. Emergency services providers and media outlets highlighted the necessity of keeping traditional landline service, as did Cal Fire.

In what should serve as a wake up call, this event highlighted the fact that technological cyber threats are looming. As Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and cellular networks are vulnerable to hacks and cyber attacks it’s not a matter of IF such an attack will happen, but WHEN. If cell networks are compromised in the middle of an emergency or natural disaster, having access to POTS is critical to the public’s safety.

On behalf of myself and those in my community, I strongly urge you to reject AT&T’s application for relief of its COLR obligation in favor of the choice that will save people’s lives.

Thank you for considering my concerns on this important issue.

Respectfully,

Name