

**STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

At a session of the Public Service Commission held by telephone and internet audio conference on the 3rd day of March, 2020.

In the Matter of Proposed Modifications to)
the Missouri Universal Service Fund) **File No. TO-2019-0346**

ORDER GRANTING STAFF MOTION FOR CLARIFICATION

Issue Date: March 3, 2021

Effective Date: April 2, 2021

At the request of the Staff of the Commission, the Commission has suspended assessment of the Missouri Universal Service Fund (Missouri USF) and has increased the support amount that Missouri USF subscribers can access. On February 11, 2021, Staff filed a Motion for Clarification Regarding Missouri USF support.

Staff explains that on February 3, 2021, the Universal Service Fund Board authorized Staff to seek clarification of the Commission’s prior order. Staff asks for clarification on whether Missouri USF support can be available for a bundled service if the service also receives support from the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP).

EBBP was created from the Consolidated Appropriations Act signed into law on December 27, 2020.¹ The details of EBBP are currently being worked out by the FCC, but EBBP will have a similar mission as the Lifeline program by offering discounted broadband service to qualifying low-income consumers.

The Missouri USF dollar amounts reflected on the Missouri USF website are based on the expectation that total state and federal Lifeline support will be \$24. Additional support, such as EBBP, was never contemplated for the mathematical equation determining Missouri

¹ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, H.R. 133, 116th Cong. (“The Act”).

USF support amounts. In this regard, the availability of Missouri USF support is unclear for a bundled service subscriber within the Lifeline or Disabled programs who also receives the EBBP benefit, if monthly charges for the bundled service are not fully recovered.

Staff recommends the Commission issue an order as soon as practical providing the following clarification:

Missouri USF support is available to qualifying subscribers for voice service or a voice service bundled with broadband service. Missouri USF support for the Lifeline program shall be \$24.00 minus applicable federal Lifeline support. Missouri USF support for the Disabled program shall be \$24.00. Missouri USF support should be further adjusted to ensure any and all monthly benefits provided to a subscriber do not exceed the subscriber's monthly charges, including a subscriber line charge, for voice service or for voice service bundled with broadband service.

In Staff's opinion, this proposed text addresses the lack of clarity regarding Missouri USF support for a bundled service and is consistent with existing Commission Rule 20 CSR 4240-31.014(7). The proposed text also ensures total state and federal support provided to a subscriber does not exceed the subscriber's monthly charges for the service. Existing Missouri USF support amount levels are maintained; however, this text accommodates a future increase in Missouri USF Lifeline voice-only support should the FCC eliminate corresponding federal support as planned on December 1, 2021.

Commission Rule 20 CSR 4240-4.080(13) allows ten days for responses to pleadings unless otherwise ordered by the Commission. The Commission issued no order contrary to this rule, ten days have elapsed since Staff's motion, and the Commission has received no responses. Thus, the Commission will take up Staff's motion unopposed.

The Commission finds Staff's motion reasonable, and will grant it.

THE COMMISSION ORDERS THAT:

1. Staff's Motion for Clarification Regarding Missouri USF Support is granted.
2. Missouri USF support is available to qualifying subscribers for voice service or a voice service bundled with broadband service. Missouri USF support for the Lifeline program shall be \$24.00 minus applicable federal Lifeline support. Missouri USF support for the Disabled program shall be \$24.00. Missouri USF support should be further adjusted to ensure any and all monthly benefits provided to a subscriber do not exceed the subscriber's monthly charges, including a subscriber line charge, for voice service or for voice service bundled with broadband service.
3. This order shall become effective on April 2, 2021.



BY THE COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Morris L. Woodruff".

Morris L. Woodruff
Secretary

Silvey, Chm., Kenney, Rupp, Coleman, and
Holsman CC., concur.

Pridgin, Regulatory Law Judge