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February 14, 2024

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

Dear President Reynolds,

I write to you today regarding AT&T's application to end its Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligation in the state of California. As a Member of Congress, I am concerned that the withdrawal of AT&T landlines will not only harm consumer choice but also pose safety issues in California. Over 2,000 California residents have written to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to express their concerns regarding the potential withdrawal of landline services. AT&T is designated as the Carrier of Last Resort in California and has a duty to provide landline services to those who need them.

Many elderly residents have commented that their landline is still their preferred method of communication. In cases of medical emergencies, landlines are still associated with addresses, making it easier for first responders to arrive at the correct address. California residents should have variety and choice in their preferred communications, especially elderly residents.

In addition to concerns about how this may impact elderly residents, I am also especially concerned with the potential public safety issues which could arise if the CPUC approves AT&T's proposal. Californians in rural and urban areas often face natural disasters, including earthquakes, flooding, and fires. In these times of emergencies, our landlines become the most dependable form of communication. While wireless connection is unreliable and cell phones can run out of battery, copper landlines have stronger receptions during power outages.

Also of critical importance is the ability for our rural areas to have secure forms of communication. As the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) stated, "over 580,000 affected AT&T customers would be left with fewer options in terms of choice, quality, and affordability." Many rural California residents view landlines as their safest option for emergencies, as reliable cell service is not available to all Californians, something I am focused on improving in Congress. I believe that AT&T's proposed withdrawal would harm rural residents disproportionately and the CPUC should weigh this factor heavily in its review of their application to end their COLR obligation.

Californians must have reliable access to communication services, especially during emergencies. I believe no resident of California should be left behind when it comes to safety and connectivity, which landlines still provide for so many in our state. I hope these points are taken into consideration as the CPUC considers the AT&T application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam B. Schiff".

Adam B Schiff
Member of Congress