

**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, DC 20554**

<b>In the Matter of</b>	)	
	)	
Empowering Broadband Consumers Through Transparency	)	CG Docket No. 22-2
	)	
	)	
Delete, Delete, Delete	)	GN Docket No. 25-133

**REPLY COMMENTS OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, NATIONAL DIGITAL INCLUSION ALLIANCE, MEDIAJUSTICE, COMMON SENSE MEDIA, EVERYONE ON, CITY OF BOSTON, NEW AMERICA’S OPEN TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE, BENTON INSTITUTE FOR BROADBAND & SOCIETY, NTEN, MASSACHUSETTS DIGITAL EQUITY COALITION, MASSACHUSETTS LAW REFORM INSTITUTE**

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**I. Introduction**

Public Knowledge, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, MediaJustice, Common Sense Media, Everyone On, City of Boston, New America’s Open Technology Institute, Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, NTEN, Massachusetts Digital Equity Coalition, and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (“Joint Commenters”) submit these reply comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (“FCC” or “Commission”) Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“FNPRM”) in the above-referenced proceedings.

One of the FCC’s core responsibilities is to safeguard consumers’ access to clear, accurate information and meaningful choice. Consumers consistently demonstrate that they want transparency, accountability, and a real opportunity to select communications services that align with their needs and budgets. Further, robust disclosures are the bedrock of trust, competition, and accountability in the marketplace. The Commission must not open the door to incremental rollbacks that erode these protections and could leave consumers with less clarity, fewer tools to

detect and challenge errors, and diminished confidence when shopping for broadband services. Unfortunately, many of the industry-backed proposals now before the Commission offer no concrete quantification of the alleged compliance burdens with broadband labels and instead rely on vague assertions that the labels are “confusing” or of “minimal benefit” without consumer research or credible evidence.

The Commission should reject these unsupported claims and reaffirm its commitment to strong, enforceable safeguards that ensure transparency, empower consumers, and promote competition.

## **II. Consumer Evidence Should Guide the Commission’s Response to Broadband Label Improvements.**

From the outset, the most troubling aspects of this effort to slowly dismantle transparency of the communications marketplace are: 1) the very framing of the overarching “Delete, Delete, Delete” proceeding, which relies heavily on industry’s unsubstantiated assertions about so-called burdensome requirements and 2) the fact that this proceeding was never designed to elevate the lived experiences of consumers. Decisions that impact households should be grounded in empirical evidence from consumers rather than generalized industry claims. Instead, the basis for proposed changes to the consumer broadband labels is ISPs’ claim that they are experiencing an undue burden. Put plainly by the New York State Public Service Commission, this proceeding “[reflects] industry’s desire to eliminate consumer protections and obtain more revenue from consumers.”<sup>1</sup> The Joint Commenters similarly agree with AARP’s argument that, “ISPs’ substantial net earnings year after year, which result from their sales of an essential utility service offered at unregulated prices in monopolistic or duopolistic markets render their claims of

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<sup>1</sup> Comments of New York State Public Service Commission in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 12, 2026) at page 2.

burdens implausible.”<sup>2</sup> As Public Knowledge et al. stated in their initial comments, the Commission would be better served by understanding how consumers are currently experiencing the broadband labels and how enforcement could be strengthened. Recent research by Consumer Reports revealed that, among consumers who shopped around for broadband service since April 2024:

- 7% of consumers reported, “saw the broadband label(s) when I was shopping around, but that information was not helpful;”
- 23% of consumers reported, “saw the broadband label(s) when I was shopping around, and that information was helpful;”
- 29% of consumers reported, “did not see any broadband label(s) when I was shopping around;” and
- 41% of consumers reported, “do not recall or are unsure.”<sup>3</sup>

The Consumer Reports research underscores the importance of broadband labels even among consumers who have never seen them in practice. There is an overwhelming recognition that pricing and service standards greatly improve consumers’ ability to compare options and make informed decisions, as evidenced by the nearly seven in ten consumers who state broadband labels would be very helpful and the 29% of consumers who stated they would be somewhat helpful with clear information.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, in defining “burdens,” the Commission would be better served by looking through the point of view of consumers who have trouble understanding what they are shopping for and paying for, are trapped in plans they cannot escape, and have no clear way to push back when companies mislead or obstruct them from accessing services they were contractually promised. In addition to the cost of broadband, households bear the burden of the time, stress, and effort spent navigating confusing terms, billing, and runaround customer service.

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<sup>2</sup> Comments of AARP in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 3.

<sup>3</sup> Broadband Labels Consumer Reports Nationally Representative Phone and Internet Survey January 2026, CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (February 12, 2026) at page 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Id* at page. 4.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that the broadband label requirements were not created due to abstract policy preferences. Congress required the Commission to develop them due to a well-documented history of pernicious industry billing practices that systematically harmed consumers. Research shows that for years prior to these rules, there were industry-wide practices that were designed to obscure the true cost of broadband.<sup>5</sup> Against that backdrop, the current effort to eliminate key label requirements should be evaluated alongside the actions that brought us to this point.

### **III. Modernization of Provider-Consumer Communications Must Strengthen Clarity, Accountability, and Accessibility**

The Joint Commenters previously argued that those with limited or new experience navigating online information, older consumers, and those concerned with online scams and data security are likely to depend on telephone-based interactions.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, based on recent research from Consumer Reports, 24% of consumers 55 and up, 24% of consumers making less than \$30,000, and 25% of those who identify as Republicans are more likely to shop around and/or sign up for broadband service on the phone.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as previously stated, we support the proposal raised by New America’s Open Technology Institute that the Commission could “clarify that providers must disclose broadband plan details in a manner consistent with the structure and substance of the labels, without requiring a verbatim recitation.”<sup>8</sup> We further agree with The Utility Reform Network (TURN), who argue that the “Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau [could] work with public interest groups, community-based organizations,

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<sup>5</sup> Becky Chao, Claire Park, and Joshua Stager (Jul 15, 2020), “The Cost of Connectivity 2020,” New America’s Open Technology Institute, <https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/cost-connectivity-2020/>.

<sup>6</sup> Comments of Public Knowledge, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, Open Technology Institute at New America, National Consumer Law Center, Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, and The Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights in CG Docket 22-2; GN Docket 25-133 (January 16, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> Broadband Labels Consumer Reports Nationally Representative Phone and Internet Survey January 2026, (February 12, 2026) at page 6, <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/1021215510049/1>.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Raza Panjwani in CG Docket 22-2; GN Docket 25-133 (October 22, 2025), at page 2.

providers, and the public, to develop a script that meaningfully explains the broadband label material in a more conversational and understandable way for those purchasing services over the phone.”<sup>9</sup> This approach properly balances accuracy with practicality and ensures that consumers receive information aligned with the label’s format.

AARP offered a complementary solution, which was to “require providers to supplement the information that they provide over the phone with an offer to send a photo of the label via text to a consumer’s cell phone or via email. Potential customers could then view the label either in real time while they discuss the ISP’s services with a customer service representative or at a later time. ISPs could also text or email customers a hyperlink to their broadband labels.”<sup>10</sup> CTIA similarly suggested the following: If a customer on the phone wants the full content of the label, directing them to a link or website containing the label is more likely to reduce confusion and ensure fidelity than relying on reading the label.<sup>11</sup> We agree with the underlying principle raised by CTIA but we reject the conditional framing of “if.” A direct link or electronic copy of the label should be required. The burden should not be placed on consumers to know that they must request access to critical information. As stated by TURN, “the intent of the labels was for them to be available to consumers at the beginning of the shopping process, not when a consumer either is informed of their existence or asks for the labels to be revealed to them.”<sup>12</sup>

Most importantly, we share AARP’s position that the Commission should “[welcome] measures that modernize interactions between ISPs and customers provided that such measures do not erode existing consumer protections.”<sup>13</sup> Any modernization of provider-consumer

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<sup>9</sup> Reply Comments of The Utility Reform Network CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (February 13, 2026) at page 5.

<sup>10</sup> Comments of AARP in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 7.

<sup>11</sup> Comments of CTIA in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 8.

<sup>12</sup> Comments of The Utility Reform Network (TURN) in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 5.

<sup>13</sup> Comments of AARP in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 7.

communications must strengthen clarity and accountability but there must be many methods of accessibility to ensure no consumers are left out.

#### **IV. The Commission Must Preserve Machine Readability and Guarantee Accessible Broadband Labels**

Throughout this proceeding, industry commenters have characterized even modest measures of transparency, such as the requirement of a machine-readable format, as unduly burdensome, yet they do so without meaningful evidence. The Commission should not be persuaded by repeated, unsupported assertions that are void of concrete examples of technical obstacles.

By contrast, other commenters have demonstrated exactly what harm would result if the machine-readable formats are eliminated. The Accessibility Organizations explain “this requirement is essential to ensure that DeafBlind, blind, and low-vision consumers using assistive technologies are able to receive the benefits associated with the broadband label rules, including comparing plans to ensure the broadband package they are choosing meets their needs.”<sup>14</sup> TURN also states that “screen readers and refreshable braille displays are just a few examples of the technologies that require machine-readability to function [and a] simple scanned image may not be compatible with all screen readers or may not provide an accurate enough translation that information can be meaningfully conveyed to those who need it.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the elimination of machine readability would disproportionately harm consumers who rely on assistive technologies. This undermines accessibility and equity.

In addition to the direct benefits for consumers with additional accessibility needs, machine readability serves a critical public interest function. As TURN observes,

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<sup>14</sup> Comments of The Accessibility Organizations in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 7.

<sup>15</sup> Comments of The Utility Reform Network (TURN) in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 5.

“Machine-readability also empowers research organizations to collect, collate, and use broadband label data to provide a clear landscape of how affordability is impacting households both nationally and at a granular level. Without machine-readability, large scale information collection becomes a tedious data-entry process that must be combed through by hand, stifling research and creating information gaps that would otherwise not exist.”<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, access to a label in the customer portal that summarizes a customer’s current plan is a core accountability mechanism. Readily available, up-to-date information allows customers to verify they are receiving the services for which they are actually paying and that charges align with contractual obligations. It also enables meaningful comparison shopping and protects customers from changes in pricing or service terms. We agree with the commenter who states that the obligation to display labels in customer portals is “de minimis” alongside the fact that “[if] a broadband provider offers a portal, that is the logical place to put the required information. And the broadband label is the natural format for that information.”<sup>17</sup>

Language accessibility is equally indispensable. We agree with AARP who states that there is no adequate alternative that would ensure speakers of languages other than English, including those ISPs actively market their services, can easily access critical information about broadband rates and fees. Similarly, we agree with Asian Americans Advancing Justice|AAJC, et al., who warn that elimination of multilingual requirements would harm those with limited English proficiency.<sup>18</sup> We agree with the assertion from New America’s Open Technology Institute that “[if] a provider invests in developing materials and content in a language,

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<sup>16</sup> Comments of The Utility Reform Network (TURN) in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 5.

<sup>17</sup> Comments of Scott Jordan in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 5.

<sup>18</sup> Comments of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates, the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, the Filipina Women’s Network, and the Japanese American Citizens League in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 2, 2026) at page 2.

producing a label in that language (especially given the relatively standardized label format) is a minimal burden.”<sup>19</sup> Overall, the Joint Commenters strongly urge the Commission to maintain accessibility, machine readability, and portal availability to ensure the broadband labels fulfill the purpose of empowering consumers and strengthening competition in the broadband marketplace.

**V. The Commission Must Maintain Fee Transparency and Preserve Affordability Information.**

The Joint Commenters oppose the Commission’s proposal to completely eliminate the ACP information in the broadband label. We agree with TURN’s proposal to “utilize the same space on the label to advertise federal Lifeline, with the caveat that if another dedicated broadband affordability program is created that space will be used to inform consumers of that program.” Therefore, we disagree with assertions made by CTIA and USTelecom that this elimination “will avoid customer confusion now that the program has ended” and “reference to it creates confusion.”<sup>20</sup> We support AARP’s practical assessment that keeping a space for a federal subsidy “eliminates the need to re-establish the requirement later and avoids unnecessary administrative burden.”<sup>21</sup> Overall, we believe it is important to preserve the label’s role as a gateway to affordability resources without requiring major structural changes.

In addition, as Public Knowledge et al. previously explained, the Commission’s proposal to no longer require itemized fee disclosures on the broadband labels is deeply troubling. Consumers cannot meaningfully assess the true cost of service if charges are hidden without clear disclosure. Stripping away itemized fees would directly undermine the purpose of the broadband labels. TURN similarly argues that “this would only serve to dilute the effectiveness of the label and increase consumer confusion around how the final price they pay is

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<sup>19</sup> Letter from Raza Panjwani in CG Docket 22-2; GN Docket 25-133 (October 22, 2025), at page 3.

<sup>20</sup> Comments of CTIA in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 8; Comments of USTelecom in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 3.

<sup>21</sup> Comments of AARP in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 9.

calculated.”<sup>22</sup> The Joint Commenters agree with AARP’s assessment that “[a]ggregating fees with the price of the underlying high-speed internet service is unwise unless the aggregated amount is displayed in addition to the disaggregated information.”<sup>23</sup>

The broadband label is designed to promote a path for consumer empowerment, which is why it is imperative that the Commission preserve its core transparency protections with the labels.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The Joint Commenters strongly urge the Commission to reject efforts to weaken the broadband label requirements. Proposals to reduce fee transparency, scale back accessibility, and weaken machine-readability standards are not aligned with the Commission’s mandate. Because the record shows that consumers need and value clear, consistent information, the Commission should reaffirm its commitment to strong, enforceable transparency rules that result in the broadband labels being an accessible tool for consumers.

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<sup>22</sup> Comments of TURN in CG Docket No. 22-2; GN Docket No. 25-133 (January 16, 2026) at page 10.

<sup>23</sup> *Id* at page 8.