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GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

GOVERNOR HOCHUL ANNOUNCES SETTLEMENT TO PROVIDE DISCOUNTED BROADBAND TO LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS

Charter Communications Will Offer Low-Income Broadband Program for \$15 Per Month

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced that the New York State Public Service Commission had reached a settlement agreement with Charter Communications, Inc., parent company of broadband provider Spectrum, which operates in 58 out of the 62 counties in New York State, requiring the communications company to provide discounted broadband service to low-income customers in the National Free School Lunch Program or receive Supplemental Security Income benefits.

“My administration has been steadfast in its commitment to expand internet service to all New Yorkers, and this settlement directly benefits thousands of low-income New York families,” **Governor Hochul said.** “Broadband is crucial to driving economic growth and opportunity for all of our citizens, and we will continue our efforts to provide broadband access across the state.”

Today, the PSC approved an enforcement settlement with Charter, the largest cable provider in the State. An earlier merger order had a number of enforceable public interest conditions, including a condition that Charter offer a low-income broadband program with download speeds of at least 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) for \$14.99 per month. The DPS alleged Charter increased the price of its low-income broadband program to \$24.99/month at a higher speed of 50 Mbps without Commission approval, in violation of the 2016 merger order. The company disputed the allegations.

The settlement will require Charter to re-establish the program at \$15/month for 50 Mbps download speed for four years to New Yorkers in the National Free School Lunch Program or receiving SSI benefits. For years two through four of the program, Charter can't raise the price by more than the rate of inflation as measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index beginning in second year of the program.

PSC Chair Rory M. Christian said, “Ongoing litigation has delayed implementation of the State's Affordable Broadband Act, and the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) has expired. The only low-income broadband requirements that currently exist in New York are the low-income program conditions in the PSC's orders approving certain mergers. By approving this settlement, the PSC will make affordable broadband available to eligible New Yorkers in Charter's service territory while the litigation is

resolved and/or federal funding for ACP is reinstated or federal broadband policy is clarified.”

State Senator Roxanne Persaud said, “Governor Kathy Hochul’s announcement marks a significant step toward ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to affordable broadband services. This emphasizes our commitment to bridging the digital divide and supporting low-income families by providing reliable internet access. In a world where connectivity is essential, this initiative will empower our communities and enhance opportunities for those in need.”

State Senator Kristen Gonzalez said, “As a longtime advocate of internet access for all, I’m glad to see this settlement, which will keep the internet rates affordable for thousands of low-income New Yorkers. I thank the Governor and the PSC for their commitment to making internet access accessible to all.”

Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi said, “Having reliable, accessible and affordable broadband connection is crucial in today’s world. I am grateful to the Governor for her action in ensuring low-income New Yorkers have this access at affordable rates.”

Assemblymember Angelo Santabarbara said, “Expanding access to affordable internet is a crucial step in ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of income, have the opportunities they need to succeed in today’s digital world. This settlement with Charter Communications is significant for low-income families, especially those who depend on the internet for education, health care and job opportunities. By providing low-cost internet, we’re making it possible for more families to stay connected and access the resources they need to thrive. I’m proud to support initiatives like this that work to close the digital divide and create a more equitable future for all New Yorkers.”

Assemblymember Clyde Vanel said, “I commend Governor Hochul for her unwavering commitment to closing the economic gap and bridging the digital divide for low-income New Yorkers. In today’s increasingly online society and economy, it is vital that every New Yorker has the opportunity to fully participate. This settlement shows the Governor’s commitment to securing affordable, accessible and quality high-speed internet for all.”

Assemblymember Maritza Davila said, “I want to thank Governor Hochul, the Public Service Commission and Charter Communications for their collaborative efforts in launching this vital program to provide \$15 Internet services to low-income households across New York. Access to the Internet is not just a luxury but a necessity, especially for young families. In today’s digital age, the Internet is a crucial tool for education, employment, and accessing essential services. This program will help ensure that our children can continue their studies, that parents can seek and maintain employment, and that families stay connected with the resources they need to thrive. Thank you for recognizing the importance of digital inclusion and for taking this significant step toward bridging the digital divide in our communities.”