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February 25, 2015

Audrey Rowe
Administrator
Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Administrator Rowe:

I write to you today regarding reports of purported beneficiaries of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) engaging in rampant fraud and abuse of the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Lifeline program.

As you may know, SNAP program beneficiaries are allowed to participate in the Lifeline program due to categorical eligibility. One way to receive a taxpayer-subsidized cell phone is for SNAP program beneficiaries to show their SNAP card as proof of participation in one of the programs that provide eligibility to Lifeline. However, Lifeline's vendors cannot properly verify applicants without photo identification.

Recently, news investigators reported that employees of Total Call Mobile (TCM), a nationwide cell phone provider and Lifeline vendor, deliberately failed to enforce the government's eligibility rules. Instead, TCM employees allowed individuals to illegally receive free cell phones at the expense of the taxpayers, including small business owners. In this specific case, news investigators discovered widespread and deliberate fraud in which non-eligible individuals could sign up for free cell phones using SNAP cards that did not belong to them.

Clearly, these flaws within the application process and proof of eligibility requirements facilitate fraud within the Lifeline program and demand that the SNAP program be reformed. Current law offers each state the option to require a photograph of one or more members of a household to be printed on an SNAP-provided EBT debit card, much like a photo on some debit cards. I believe this change should be made mandatory and required nationally to bring some measure of control to these fraud-ridden programs.

The current standards regulating SNAP and Lifeline beneficiaries are ineffective and allow for routine abuse by repeat offenders. I urge you to protect the integrity of both programs moving forward by requiring photos to be a part of SNAP cards.

Sincerely,



David Vitter

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship