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USVI Officials Urge Congress to Preserve Affordable Connectivity Program Vital for Residents

Virgin Islands leadership advocates for continuation of FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program

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U.S. Virgin Islands officials, led by Marvin A. Blyden and Marise C. James of the 35th Legislature, have joined a nationwide call to Congress, urging for the extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). This plea comes amid warnings that the program's expiration in April could have severe repercussions for thousands of Virgin Islanders and millions of Americans.

In a letter addressed to the leaders of both the United States House of Representatives and the Senate, Mr. Blyden, chairman of the Committee on Housing, Transportation & Telecommunications, and Ms. James, vice-chair of the same committee, stress the importance of

continued funding for the ACP. They join numerous state and local officials, including governors and over 174 mayors, in expressing strong support for the program that currently benefits over 23 million families.

The ACP plays a pivotal role in ensuring that households, particularly in areas like the U.S. Virgin Islands, can afford necessary broadband for work, school, healthcare, and other critical services. The program offers a discount of up to \$30 per month towards internet service for eligible households, and up to \$75 per month for those on qualifying Tribal lands. Additionally, the ACP provides a one-time discount of up to \$100 for the purchase of a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet, making digital accessibility more achievable for low-income families.

The termination of the ACP, as announced by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), could lead to a significant setback in broadband accessibility.

The officials underscore the critical role of high-speed internet in modern society, equating its necessity to that of electricity and telephone services in previous generations. They quote James Madison to emphasize knowledge's governing power in a democratic society and argue that affordable internet access is vital to American democracy.

The letter emphasizes the bipartisan support for the ACP and calls on Congress to demonstrate its political will to protect and provide for the American people.