

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA



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Joint Application of Charter
Communications, Inc., Charter
Communications Holdings, LLC, and Cox
Enterprises, Inc. for Approval Pursuant to
Public Utilities Code Section 854 of the
Indirect Transfer of Control of Cox
California Telcom, LLC (U-5684-C)

Application 25-07-016

**NOTICE OF EX PARTE MEETING
OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATES OFFICE**

In accordance with Rule 8.4(a) of the California Public Utilities Commission's (Commission) Rules of Practice and Procedure, the Public Advocates Office at the California Public Utilities Commission (Cal Advocates) provides notice hereby provides this notice of an ex parte communication in the above-captioned proceeding. The communication took place on May 13, 2026, via Webex video conference between representatives of Cal Advocates and the office of Commissioner Darcie L. Houck. The meeting lasted approximately thirty minutes, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner Houck's Deputy Chief of Staff, Victor Smith, and Advisor Ben Menzies attended the meeting. Cal Advocates' representatives Ernesto Falcon (Program Manager), Antoinette Floyd (Program and Project Supervisor), Bixia Ye (Analyst), Catherine Blake (Analyst), and Noah Stid (Counsel for Cal Advocates) also attended the meeting.

Cal Advocates explained that Charter's acquisition of Cox Enterprises is a nationwide joint venture that will combine Cox and Charter's customer base, officially making them the nation's largest service provider with more than 38 million subscribers across 41 states. Therefore, Cal Advocates explained that its priorities in this proceeding included ensuring that low-income customers of the post-merger entity have access to

affordable, high-speed broadband service offerings and preventing excessive geographic promotional pricing disparities across California.

Cal Advocates provided an overview of the settlement agreement (Agreement) between Cal Advocates and Charter, jointly filed in the above captioned proceeding on May 1, 2026. The Agreement provides that Charter will offer the New California LifeLine Service Tiers and a Standalone Non-LifeLine Service Tier to eligible low-income customers, as described in the Agreement at pages 4-9.

Cal Advocates explained that the Standalone Non-LifeLine Service is available to qualifying low-income residents who are not enrolled in California LifeLine Broadband Pilot Program (LifeLine Pilot). Charter will offer new and existing low-income eligible customers access to 100/20 Mbps service for \$20 per month for five years, with no long-term contracts or early termination fees. Cal Advocates explained that this is an important benefit, because not all eligible low-income customers enroll in the LifeLine Pilot program.

Cal Advocates further explained that the Agreement requires Charter to offer the New California LifeLine Service Tiers for low-income customers enrolled in the LifeLine Pilot. First, these tiers include a standalone 100/20 Mbps residential home internet access plan for \$20.00 per month, and \$30.00 per month if bundled with wireline voice service, which results in zero (*i.e.*, no net monthly charge) cost to customers when the LifeLine subsidy is applied (the LifeLine Pilot provides subsidies of \$20 per month for standalone service and \$30 per month for bundled service). Cal Advocates explained that this provision is expected to generate significant consumer savings over the five-year term, and that calculations will be provided with Cal Advocates' Opening Brief.

Second, Cal Advocates explained that the Agreement provides a standalone 500/20 Mbps residential home internet access plan for \$50.00 per month and the same price if bundled with wireline voice services, resulting in a \$20-\$30 out of pocket cost after the application of the LifeLine subsidy (the LifeLine Pilot provides subsidies of \$20 per month for standalone service and \$30 per month for bundled service). With the Agreement in place, the companies will be required to participate in the Commission's

current broadband LifeLine Pilot for the next 3 years of the program, and the pricing of these low-income offerings is fixed and extends the same cost savings to program participants over an additional two years, for a five-year period in total. The Agreement also ensures continuity for customers currently enrolled in Cox's existing low-income service plans. Specifically, Charter commits that existing Cox customers enrolled in a qualifying low-income service tier may remain on that plan for at least five years.

Cal Advocates also explained that the Agreement provides for a cap on Charter's promotional pricing at current levels for a three-year period. Cal Advocates described that promotional pricing is important to affordability of service because promotional offers are a primary method that broadband providers use to compete for customers. When customers first subscribe to broadband service, they typically receive promotional pricing for a limited period, often 12 months. Even though these promotional prices are temporary, they are important because they reflect providers' efforts to attract and retain customers. While Charter remains free to lower its promotional pricing, if Charter lowers promotional prices in competitive areas, it must also adjust statewide promotional pricing downward to ensure the pricing difference does not exceed \$15 per month. This provision addresses Cal Advocates' priority to ensure that post-merger Charter does not increase statewide promotional prices, and that consumers in less competitive areas will not face significantly more expensive promotional pricing than consumers in competitive areas.

Cal Advocates explained that the Agreement reflects Cal Advocates' goals to establish affordable low-income broadband plans, set caps on promotional pricing, and limit discriminatory pricing. With these concessions from Charter, Cal Advocates explained that the transaction meets the public interest requirements of Section 854.

Therefore, Cal Advocates respectfully requested that the Commission approve the Charter/Cox merger and adopt the settlement agreement at the August 13, 2026 voting meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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