



ORA

*Office of Ratepayer Advocates
California Public Utilities Commission*

505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, California 94102
Tel: 415-703-2381
Fax: 415-703-2057

JOSEPH P. COMO
Acting Director

<http://ora.ca.gov>

March 26, 2014

Honorable Jean Fuller
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 3063
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1364 (Fuller) – Support

Dear Senator Fuller:

The Office of Ratepayer Advocates (ORA) is the independent consumer advocate within the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). ORA's statutory mandate is to obtain the lowest possible rates for utility services consistent with safe and reliable service levels. ORA also advocates for customer and environmental protections in connection with utility service.

ORA supports your SB 1346, which would extend the sunset date on the California High Cost Fund A and B programs from January 1, 2015 to January 1, 2019. These important programs advance the States goals of universal service by ensuring all Californians have access to affordable and available telephone services.

We also suggest that as you consider extending the sunset date on these important programs that you work with ORA and other stakeholders to augment the accountability and efficiency of these programs. We suggest the following for your consideration:

- (1) Require program recipients to regularly demonstrate to the Legislature and CPUC how they utilized program funds to help achieve the State's goal of universal service;
- (2) Require participating carriers to demonstrate that they have maximized federal funds before applying for state funds; and
- (3) Provide that all reasonable investments be made in a "least cost best fit" manner.

ORA supports your efforts to ensure voice and broadband access services are ubiquitously available and affordable. We look forward to working with you to ensure these programs operate most prudently consistent with public benefit. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please call ORA's Legislative Advisor Rebecca Lee, at (916) 327-1407 or me at (415) 703-2381.

Respectfully,

Joseph P. Como, Acting Director
Office of Ratepayer Advocates

By
Rebecca Lee
Legislative Advisor