117TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION

S. 120

AN ACT

To prevent and respond to the misuse of communications services that facilitates domestic violence and other crimes.

- 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
- ${\it 2\ tives\ of\ the\ United\ States\ of\ America\ in\ Congress\ assembled},$

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

- This Act may be cited as the "Safe Connections Act
- 3 of 2022".

4 SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

- 5 Except as otherwise provided in this Act, terms used
- 6 in this Act that are defined in section 345(a) of the Com-
- 7 munications Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of this
- 8 Act, have the meanings given those terms in such section
- 9 345(a).

10 SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

- 11 Congress finds the following:
- 12 (1) Domestic violence, dating violence, stalking,
- sexual assault, human trafficking, and related
- crimes are life-threatening issues and have lasting
- and harmful effects on individuals, families, and en-
- 16 tire communities.
- 17 (2) Survivors often lack meaningful support
- and options when establishing independence from an
- abuser, including barriers such as financial insecu-
- 20 rity and limited access to reliable communications
- 21 tools to maintain essential connections with family,
- social safety networks, employers, and support serv-
- 23 ices.
- 24 (3) Perpetrators of violence and abuse described
- in paragraph (1) increasingly use technological and

1	communications tools to exercise control over, mon-
2	itor, and abuse their victims.
3	(4) Communications law can play a public in-
4	terest role in the promotion of safety, life, and prop-
5	erty with respect to the types of violence and abuse
6	described in paragraph (1). For example, inde-
7	pendent access to a wireless phone plan can assist
8	survivors in establishing security and autonomy.
9	(5) Safeguards within communications services
10	can serve a role in preventing abuse and narrowing
11	the digital divide experienced by survivors of abuse.
12	SEC. 4. PROTECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS
13	WITHIN COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES.
14	Part I of title III of the Communications Act of 1934
15	(47 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
16	the following:
17	"SEC. 345. PROTECTION OF SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIO-
18	LENCE, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, AND RELATED
19	CRIMES.
20	"(a) Definitions.—In this section:
21	"(1) Abuser.—The term 'abuser' means an in-
22	dividual who has committed or allegedly committed
23	a covered act against—
24	"(A) an individual who seeks relief under
25	subsection (b); or

1	"(B) an individual in the care of an indi-
2	vidual who seeks relief under subsection (b).
3	"(2) Covered act.—
4	"(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'covered act'
5	means conduct that constitutes—
6	"(i) a crime described in section
7	40002(a) of the Violence Against Women
8	Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12291(a)), includ-
9	ing domestic violence, dating violence, sex-
10	ual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking;
11	"(ii) an act or practice described in
12	paragraph (11) or (12) of section 103 of
13	the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of
14	2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102) (relating to severe
15	forms of trafficking in persons and sex
16	trafficking, respectively); or
17	"(iii) an act under State law, Tribal
18	law, or the Uniform Code of Military Jus-
19	tice that is similar to an offense described
20	in clause (i) or (ii).
21	"(B) Conviction not required.—Noth-
22	ing in subparagraph (A) shall be construed to
23	require a criminal conviction or any other deter-
24	mination of a court in order for conduct to con-
25	stitute a covered act

1	"(3) COVERED PROVIDER.—The term 'covered
2	provider' means a provider of a private mobile serv-
3	ice or commercial mobile service, as those terms are
4	defined in section 332(d).
5	"(4) Primary account holder.—The term
6	'primary account holder' means an individual who is
7	a party to a mobile service contract with a covered
8	provider.
9	"(5) Shared mobile service contract.—
10	The term 'shared mobile service contract'—
11	"(A) means a mobile service contract for
12	an account that includes not less than 2 con-
13	sumers; and
14	"(B) does not include enterprise services
15	offered by a covered provider.
16	"(6) Survivor.—The term 'survivor' means an
17	individual who is not less than 18 years old and—
18	"(A) against whom a covered act has been
19	committed or allegedly committed; or
20	"(B) who cares for another individual
21	against whom a covered act has been committed
22	or allegedly committed (provided that the indi-
23	vidual providing care did not commit or alleg-
24	edly commit the covered act).

1	"(b) Separation of Lines From Shared Mobile
2	SERVICE CONTRACT.—
3	"(1) In general.—Not later than 2 business
4	days after receiving a completed line separation re-
5	quest from a survivor pursuant to subsection (c), a
6	covered provider shall, as applicable, with respect to
7	a shared mobile service contract under which the
8	survivor and the abuser each use a line—
9	"(A) separate the line of the survivor, and
10	the line of any individual in the care of the sur-
11	vivor, from the shared mobile service contract;
12	or
13	"(B) separate the line of the abuser from
14	the shared mobile service contract.
15	"(2) Limitations on penalties, fees, and
16	OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—Except as provided in
17	paragraphs (5) through (8), a covered provider may
18	not make separation of a line from a shared mobile
19	service contract under paragraph (1) contingent on
20	any requirement other than the requirements under
21	subsection (c), including—
22	"(A) payment of a fee, penalty, or other
23	charge;

1	"(B) maintaining contractual or billing re-
2	sponsibility of a separated line with the pro-
3	vider;
4	"(C) approval of separation by the primary
5	account holder, if the primary account holder is
6	not the survivor;
7	"(D) a prohibition or limitation, including
8	one described in subparagraph (A), on number
9	portability, provided such portability is tech-
10	nically feasible, or a request to change phone
11	numbers;
12	"(E) a prohibition or limitation on the sep-
13	aration of lines as a result of arrears accrued
14	by the account;
15	"(F) an increase in the rate charged for
16	the mobile service plan of the primary account
17	holder with respect to service on any remaining
18	line or lines; or
19	"(G) any other limitation or requirement
20	not listed under subsection (c).
21	"(3) Rule of Construction.—Nothing in
22	paragraph (2) shall be construed to require a cov-
23	ered provider to provide a rate plan for the primary
24	account holder that is not otherwise commercially
25	available.

- 1 "(4) Remote option.—A covered provider 2 shall offer a survivor the ability to submit a line sep-3 aration request under subsection (c) through secure 4 remote means that are easily navigable, provided 5 that remote options are commercially available and 6 technically feasible.
 - "(5) Responsibility for transferred telephone number or numbers.—Notwithstanding paragraph (2), beginning on the date on which a covered provider transfers billing responsibilities for and rights to a telephone number or numbers to a survivor under paragraph (1)(A) in response to a line separation request submitted by the survivor under subsection (c), unless ordered otherwise by a court, the survivor shall assume financial responsibility, including for monthly service costs, for the transferred telephone number or numbers.
 - "(6) RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSFERRED TELEPHONE NUMBERS FROM A SURVIVOR'S ACCOUNT.—Notwithstanding paragraph (2), upon the transfer of a telephone number under paragraph (1)(B) in response to a line separation request submitted by a survivor under subsection (c), the survivor shall have no further financial responsibilities to the transferring covered provider for the services

provided by the transferring covered provider for the telephone number or for any mobile device associated with the telephone number.

"(7) Responsibility for mobile device.—
Notwithstanding paragraph (2), beginning on the date on which a covered provider transfers billing responsibilities for and rights to a telephone number or numbers to a survivor under paragraph (1)(A) in response to a line separation request submitted by the survivor under subsection (c), unless otherwise ordered by a court, the survivor shall not assume financial responsibility for any mobile device associated with the separated line, unless the survivor purchased the mobile device, or affirmatively elects to maintain possession of the mobile device.

"(8) Notice to survivor.—If a covered provider separates a line from a shared mobile service contract under paragraph (1) and the primary account holder is not the survivor, the covered provider shall notify the survivor of the date on which the covered provider intends to give any formal notice to the primary account holder.

"(c) LINE SEPARATION REQUEST.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—A survivor shall submit to the covered provider a line separation request that—

1	"(A) verifies that an individual who uses a
2	line under the shared mobile service contract
3	has committed or allegedly committed a covered
4	act against the survivor or an individual in the
5	survivor's care, by providing—
6	"(i) a copy of a signed affidavit from
7	a licensed medical or mental health care
8	provider, licensed military medical or men-
9	tal health care provider, licensed social
10	worker, victim services provider, or licensed
11	military victim services provider, or an em-
12	ployee of a court, acting within the scope
13	of that person's employment; or
14	"(ii) a copy of a police report, state-
15	ments provided by police, including mili-
16	tary police, to magistrates or judges,
17	charging documents, protective or restrain-
18	ing orders, military protective orders, or
19	any other official record that documents
20	the covered act;
21	"(B) in the case of relief sought under
22	subsection (b)(1)(A), with respect to—
23	"(i) a line used by the survivor that
24	the survivor seeks to have separated, states

1	that the survivor is the user of that spe-
2	cific line; and
3	"(ii) a line used by an individual in
4	the care of the survivor that the survivor
5	seeks to have separated, includes an affi-
6	davit setting forth that the individual—
7	"(I) is in the care of the survivor;
8	and
9	"(II) is the user of that specific
10	line; and
11	"(C) requests relief under subparagraph
12	(A) or (B) of subsection (b)(1) and identifies
13	each line that should be separated.
14	"(2) Communications from covered pro-
15	VIDERS.—
16	"(A) In General.—A covered provider
17	shall notify a survivor seeking relief under sub-
18	section (b) in clear and accessible language that
19	the covered provider may contact the survivor,
20	or designated representative of the survivor, to
21	confirm the line separation, or if the covered
22	provider is unable to complete the line separa-
23	tion for any reason, pursuant to subparagraphs
24	(B) and (C).

1	"(B) Remote Means.—A covered provider
2	shall notify a survivor under subparagraph (A)
3	through remote means, provided that remote
4	means are commercially available and tech-
5	nically feasible.
6	"(C) ELECTION OF MANNER OF CON-
7	TACT.—When completing a line separation re-
8	quest submitted by a survivor through remote
9	means under paragraph (1), a covered provider
10	shall allow the survivor to elect in the manner
11	in which the covered provider may—
12	"(i) contact the survivor, or des-
13	ignated representative of the survivor, in
14	response to the request, if necessary; or
15	"(ii) notify the survivor, or designated
16	representative of the survivor, of the inabil-
17	ity of the covered provider to complete the
18	line separation.
19	"(3) Enhanced protections under state
20	LAW.—This subsection shall not affect any law or
21	regulation of a State providing communications pro-
22	tections for survivors (or any similar category of in-
23	dividuals) that has less stringent requirements for
24	providing evidence of a covered act (or any similar
25	category of conduct) than this subsection.

1	"(d) Confidential and Secure Treatment of
2	Personal Information.—
3	"(1) In General.—Notwithstanding section
4	222(c)(2), a covered provider and any officer, direc-
5	tor, employee, vendor, or agent thereof shall treat
6	any information submitted by a survivor under sub-
7	section (c) as confidential and securely dispose of
8	the information not later than 90 days after receiv-
9	ing the information.
10	"(2) Rule of Construction.—Nothing in
11	paragraph (1) shall be construed to prohibit a cov-
12	ered provider from maintaining, for longer than the
13	period specified in that paragraph, a record that
14	verifies that a survivor fulfilled the conditions of a
15	line separation request under subsection (c).
16	"(e) Availability of Information to Con-
17	SUMERS.—A covered provider shall make information
18	about the options and process described in subsections (b)
19	and (c) readily available to consumers—
20	"(1) on the website and the mobile application
21	of the provider;
22	"(2) in physical stores; and
23	"(3) in other forms of public-facing consumer
24	communication.
25	"(f) TECHNICAL INFEASIBILITY.—

1	"(1) IN GENERAL.—The requirement to effec-
2	tuate a line separation request pursuant to sub-
3	section (b)(1) shall not apply to a covered provider
4	if the covered provider cannot operationally or tech-
5	nically effectuate the request.
6	"(2) Notification.—If a covered provider can-
7	not operationally or technically effectuate a line sep-
8	aration request as described in paragraph (1), the
9	covered provider shall—
10	"(A) notify the survivor who submitted the
11	request of that infeasibility—
12	"(i) at the time of the request; or
13	"(ii) in the case of a survivor who has
14	submitted the request using remote means,
15	not later than 2 business days after receiv-
16	ing the request; and
17	"(B) provide the survivor with information
18	about other alternatives to submitting a line
19	separation request, including starting a new
20	line of service.
21	"(g) Liability Protection.—
22	"(1) In general.—A covered provider and any
23	officer, director, employee, vendor, or agent thereof
24	shall not be subject to liability for any claims deriv-
25	ing from an action taken or omission made with re-

1	spect to compliance with this section and the rules
2	adopted to implement this section.
3	"(2) Commission authority.—Nothing in this
4	subsection shall limit the authority of the Commis-
5	sion to enforce this section or any rules or regula-
6	tions promulgated by the Commission pursuant to
7	this section.".
8	SEC. 5. RULEMAKING ON PROTECTIONS FOR SURVIVORS
9	OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.
10	(a) Definitions.—In this section—
11	(1) the term "Affordable Connectivity Pro-
12	gram' means the program established under section
13	904(b) of division N of the Consolidated Appropria-
14	tions Act, 2021 (Public Law 116–260), as amended
15	by section 60502 of the Infrastructure Investment
16	and Jobs Act (Public Law 117–58), or any suc-
17	cessor program;
18	(2) the term "appropriate congressional com-
19	mittees" means the Committee on Commerce,
20	Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the
21	Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House
22	of Representatives;
23	(3) the term "Commission" means the Federal
24	Communications Commission:

1	(4) the term "covered hotline" means a hotline
2	related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual
3	assault, stalking, sex trafficking, severe forms of
4	trafficking in persons, or any other similar act;
5	(5) the term "designated program" means the
6	program designated by the Commission under sub-
7	section (c)(3)(A)(i) to provide emergency commu-
8	nications support to survivors;
9	(6) the term "Lifeline program" means the pro-
10	gram set forth in subpart E of part 54 of title 47,
11	Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regu-
12	lation); and
13	(7) the term "text message" has the meaning
14	given the term in section 227(e) of the Communica-
15	tions Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 227(e)).
16	(b) Rulemakings.—
17	(1) Line separations.—
18	(A) In General.—Not later than 18
19	months after the date of enactment of this Act,
20	the Commission shall adopt rules to implement
21	section 345 of the Communications Act of
22	1934, as added by section 4 of this Act.
23	(B) Considerations.—In adopting rules
24	under subparagraph (A), the Commission shall
25	consider—

1	(i) privacy protections;
2	(ii) account security and fraud detec-
3	tion;
4	(iii) account billing procedures;
5	(iv) procedures for notification of sur-
6	vivors about line separation processes;
7	(v) notice to account holders;
8	(vi) situations in which a covered pro-
9	vider cannot operationally or technically
10	separate a telephone number or numbers
11	from a shared service plan such that the
12	provider cannot effectuate a line separation
13	request;
14	(vii) the requirements for remote sub-
15	mission of a line separation request, in-
16	cluding how that option facilitates submis-
17	sion of verification information and meets
18	the other requirements of section 345 of
19	the Communications Act of 1934, as added
20	by section 4 of this Act;
21	(viii) feasibility of remote options for
22	small covered providers;
23	(ix) implementation timelines, includ-
24	ing those for small covered providers;

1	(x) financial responsibility for trans-
2	ferred telephone numbers;
3	(xi) whether and how the survivor can
4	affirmatively elect to take financial respon-
5	sibility for the mobile device associated
6	with the separated line;
7	(xii) compliance with subpart U of
8	part 64 of title 47, Code of Federal Regu-
9	lations, or any successor regulations (relat-
10	ing to customer proprietary network infor-
11	mation) or any other legal or law enforce-
12	ment requirements; and
13	(xiii) ensuring covered providers have
14	the necessary account information to com-
15	ply with the rules and with section 345 of
16	the Communications Act of 1934, as added
17	by section 4 of this Act.
18	(2) Emergency communications support
19	FOR SURVIVORS.—
20	(A) In General.—Not later than 18
21	months after the date of enactment of this Act,
22	or as part of a general rulemaking proceeding
23	relating to the Lifeline program or the Afford-
24	able Connectivity Program, whichever occurs
25	earlier the Commission shall adopt rules that—

1	(i) designate a single program, which
2	shall be either the Lifeline program or the
3	Affordable Connectivity Program, to pro-
4	vide emergency communications support to
5	survivors in accordance with this para-
6	graph; and
7	(ii) allow a survivor who is suffering
8	from financial hardship and meets the re-
9	quirements under section 345(c)(1) of the
10	Communications Act of 1934, as added by
11	section 4 of this Act, without regard to
12	whether the survivor meets the otherwise
13	applicable eligibility requirements of the
14	designated program, to—
15	(I) enroll in the designated pro-
16	gram as quickly as is feasible; and
17	(II) participate in the designated
18	program based on such qualifications
19	for not more than 6 months.
20	(B) Considerations.—In adopting rules
21	under subparagraph (A), the Commission shall
22	consider—
23	(i) how survivors who are eligible for
24	relief and elected to separate a line under
25	section 345(c)(1) of the Communications

1	Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of this
2	Act, but whose lines could not be separated
3	due to operational or technical infeasibility,
4	can participate in the designated program;
5	and
6	(ii) confidentiality in the transfer and
7	retention of any necessary documentation
8	regarding the eligibility of a survivor to en-
9	roll in the designated program.
10	(C) EVALUATION.—Not later than 2 years
11	after completing the rulemaking under subpara-
12	graph (A), the Commission shall—
13	(i) evaluate the effectiveness of the
14	Commission's provision of support to sur-
15	vivors through the designated program;
16	(ii) assess the detection and elimi-
17	nation of fraud, waste, and abuse with re-
18	spect to the support described in clause (i)
19	and
20	(iii) submit to the appropriate con-
21	gressional committees a report that in-
22	cludes the evaluation and assessment de-
23	scribed in clauses (i) and (ii), respectively.
24	(D) Rule of Construction.—Nothing in
25	this paragraph shall be construed to limit the

1	ability of a survivor who meets the require-
2	ments under section 345(c)(1) of the Commu-
3	nications Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of
4	this Act, to participate in the designated pro-
5	gram indefinitely if the survivor otherwise quali-
6	fies for the designated program under the rules
7	of the designated program.
8	(E) Notification.—A provider of wireless
9	communications services that receives a line
10	separation request pursuant to section 345 of
11	the Communications Act of 1934, as added by
12	section 4 of this Act, shall inform the survivor
13	who submitted the request of—
14	(i) the existence of the designated pro-
15	gram;
16	(ii) who qualifies to participate in the
17	designated program under the rules adopt-
18	ed under subparagraph (A) that are spe-
19	cially applicable to survivors; and
20	(iii) how to participate in the des-
21	ignated program under the rules described
22	in clause (ii).
23	(3) Hotline calls.—
24	(A) In General.—Not later than 180
25	days after the date of enactment of this Act

1	the Commission shall commence a rulemaking
2	proceeding to consider whether to, and how the
3	Commission should—
4	(i) establish, and update on a monthly
5	basis, a central database of covered hot-
6	lines to be used by providers of wireless
7	communications services or wireline voice
8	services; and
9	(ii) require providers of wireless com-
10	munications services or wireline voice serv-
11	ices to omit from consumer-facing logs of
12	calls or text messages any records of calls
13	or text messages to covered hotlines in the
14	central database described in clause (i),
15	while maintaining internal records of those
16	calls and messages.
17	(B) Considerations.—The rulemaking
18	conducted under subparagraph (A) shall include
19	consideration of—
20	(i) the ability of law enforcement
21	agencies or survivors to access a log of
22	calls or text messages in a criminal inves-
23	tigation or civil proceeding;

1	(ii) the ability of providers of wireless
2	communication services or wireline voice
3	services to—
4	(I) identify logs that are con-
5	sumer-facing; and
6	(II) omit certain consumer-facing
7	logs, while maintaining internal
8	records of such calls and text mes-
9	sages; and
10	(iii) any other factors associated with
11	the implementation of clauses (i) and (ii)
12	to protect survivors of domestic violence,
13	including factors that may impact smaller
14	providers.
15	(C) NO EFFECT ON LAW ENFORCEMENT.—
16	Nothing in subparagraph (A) shall be construed
17	to—
18	(i) limit or otherwise affect the ability
19	of a law enforcement agency to access a
20	log of calls or text messages in a criminal
21	investigation; or
22	(ii) alter or otherwise expand provider
23	requirements under the Communications
24	Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (Pub-

lie Law 103–414; 108 Stat. 4279) or the amendments made by that Act.

(D) Compliance.—If the Commission establishes a central database through the rule-making under subparagraph (A) and a covered provider updates its own databases to match the central database not less frequently than once every 30 days, no cause of action shall lie or be maintained in any court against the covered provider or its officers, employees, or agents for claims deriving from omission from consumer-facing logs of calls or text messages any records of calls or text messages to covered hotlines in the central database.

15 SEC. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.

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The requirements under section 345 of the Communications Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of this Act, shall take effect 60 days after the date on which the Federal Communications Commission adopts the rules implementing that section pursuant to section 5(b)(2) of this Act.

22 SEC. 7. SAVINGS CLAUSE.

Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this 24 Act shall be construed to abrogate, limit, or otherwise af-25 fect the provisions set forth in the Communications Assist-

- 1 ance for Law Enforcement Act (Public Law 103–414; 108
- 2 Stat. 4279) and the amendments made by that Act, any
- 3 authority granted to the Commission pursuant to that Act
- 4 or the amendments made by that Act, or any regulations
- 5 promulgated by the Commission pursuant to that Act or
- 6 the amendments made by that Act.

Passed the Senate March 17, 2022.

Attest:

Secretary.

117TH CONGRESS S. 120

AN ACT

To prevent and respond to the misuse of communications services that facilitates domestic violence and other crimes.