

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

EBB Update: One Million Sign-ups along with a Few Hiccups

The \$3.2 billion Emergency Broadband Benefit Program is off and running, with the **FCC** announcing Thursday that one million households signed up for the subsidy program in its first week of operations. But that doesn't mean there hasn't been some stumbling blocks along the way.

A *Washington Post* [column](#) detailed complaints from some consumers who said they were being asked to move into pricier plans to take advantage of the \$50/month discount (\$75 on tribal lands). It focused primarily on **Verizon**, which initially was making EBB available only to its Mix & Match plans vs older plans. After complaints, it changed its policy on Wednesday to allow customers on legacy Fios plans to enroll in EBB. "We are not asking customers to upgrade their plan in order to take advantage of the EBB benefits. Our goal is to help eligible customers find the plan that best meets their needs," Verizon said in its [update](#).

In a press conference Thursday, FCC acting chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* was asked if she had a message for providers that might try to upsell via the EBB program. "If carriers are engaging in behavior like that, they need to knock it off," she said. "They may be finding a way to provide service consistent with the letter of the law, but that behavior violates the spirit. Any consumer who has difficulties with a provider participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program should file a complaint with us and we will follow up with the provider."

It's worth noting that **Comcast** was called out in the Post piece as a "refreshing standout" because of its policy that customers on plans no longer being offered are still eligible for the program as long as they meet the federal qualification criteria.

There are more than 900 providers participating in EBB. **Cablefax** checked in with some a handful to see how they're handling the program. "We included all of our speed tiers in the EBB program so customers choosing our Connect2Compete plan all the way up to our 1-Gig services are eligible. We aren't using it as an upsell opportunity," said a **Mediacom** representative. It was a similar story at **Cox**. "We apply the discount to the customer's existing plan and bill, and we do not limit participation to specific plans. Cox customers who qualify for EBB are encouraged to use it with the broadband service that best meets the needs of their family," a spokesperson said.

Charter said it's making several Spectrum internet plans available, but isn't including the Spectrum Internet Gig plan. Legacy plans that are not eligible are former Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks plans and an "extremely small number" of Charter plans that predate Spectrum offerings.

There have been reports in first week of website crashes for the federal [GetEmergencyBroadband.org](#) website, and the site has a notice at the top that it's experiencing high demand with calls and emails being responded to as quickly as possible. Rosenworcel said it's clear the program is working by the fact one million households have been enrolled. "We are running

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the nation's first and biggest broadband affordability program. We got it set up in record time. And so on a day-to-day basis, we take a look at the website, we take a look at our systems for processing and identify if we have to change the ways we're doing things," she said. "This is how we're going to make the process run smoothly over time. And we are working on that every single day to make sure it works well."

EBB program sign-ups span all 50 states as well as DC, Puerto Rico, American Samoa and the Virgin Islands. "I think it proves beyond a doubt that there are so many families in this country struggling to get online. Help is finally here. And we are going to continue to do everything we can for this program to reach as many people as possible," Rosenworcel said.

The push continues for a permanent subsidy program. More than 40 civil rights groups, consumer organizations and private sectors companies—including **AT&T**, Comcast, Charter, **Microsoft** and **Verizon**—announced Thursday that they've formed the Broadband Equity for All coalition. The group wants Congress to adopt a federally-funded broadband benefit program that would be managed and administered by the FCC to provide low-income households with enhanced financial support that will be available after the pandemic ends. **ACA Connects**, **National Urban League** and **Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council** are among the coalition's members.

BROADBAND BILL REMOVES ETC REQUIREMENT

Cable has long complained that the **FCC's** Universal Service Fund programs limit participation by requiring providers to have designation as eligible telecommunications carriers. A bill just introduced by Rep *GK Butterfield* (D-NC) would eliminate that requirement. "Expanding eligibility to non-ETCs will enable more efficient and faster deployment of broadband infrastructure spurring greater competition," Butterfield said. **NCTA** is definitely a fan of his Expanding Opportunities for Broadband Deployment Act, saying it would allow more ISPs with a "proven track record" of operating broadband networks compete for government support.

MORE BROADBAND LEGISLATION

House Republicans unveiled their effort to close the digital divide. The American Broadband Act would authorize \$20 billion over five years to promote broadband infrastructure deployment and \$3 billion to promote rural wireless infrastructure deployment. **NTIA** would be called upon to dole out the money, using Broadband Data Act maps to ensure unserved areas were targeted. Other elements include streamlining the permitting processes with shot clocks and establishing a two-year prison term for any who willfully and maliciously destroys communications facilities. – Some 45

organizations, including **Google**, the **Fiber Broadband Association** and **Consumer Reports**, have voiced their support for the Community Broadband Act, which prohibits state and local governments from blocking the provision of broadband by public providers or public-private partnership providers. The bill was introduced earlier this year by Reps *Anna Eshoo* (D-CA), *Jared Golden* (D-ME) and Sen *Cory Booker* (D-NJ).

WEEKLY RATINGS

Once again, **Fox News** led cable nets in prime and total day, averaging 2.35 million P2+ in prime last week and 1.3 million in total day. **MSNBC** was runner-up in both dayparts (1.49 million in prime and 833,000 in total day). **HGTV** toppled **CNN** in prime, 1.19mIn vs 932K, but the newser had a slight edge over the lifestyle net in total day (638K vs 628K).

Cablefax Executive Round Up

Who was the first Asian actor you saw on television that you related to?



Annie Balgot

VP, Content Distribution

NBCUniversal

"Growing up, I can't recall seeing actors who looked like me on TV until college when Lucy Liu played Ling Woo on 'Ally McBeal,' as the only Asian American series regular on a primetime show. She was strong, fierce and brought Asian representation to TV. Although there is still progress to be made, I'm impressed by the strides my company, NBCUniversal, and the industry is taking—on and off screen."



Mark Kang

SVP of Worldwide Distribution

INSP

"I remember watching 'Enter the Dragon' as a kid and being mesmerized by Bruce Lee. I admired this legendary hero, not only for his fighting skills but also for his fighting spirit, despite the pushback from Hollywood. Like him, I too, believe you need to fight for change. As an Asian-American kid growing up, I just wished there were more heroes on screen that looked like me to relate to."



Pragash Pillai

EVP, Operations

Altice USA

"The first Asian actor that I related to was Irrfan Khan, who was born in India but has starred in many American films that highlighted Indian culture. Films like 'Life of Pi' and 'The Namesake' both contained characters that moved from Asia to other countries. They show the hardship that comes with moving while trying to maintain your cultural heritage. The theme of growth as a person by embracing different parts of the world and the unknown still resonate with me today, and Khan was able to bring these situations and emotions to light through his incredible acting ability."

NEXSTAR, CW REACH MULTI-YEAR DEAL

Nexstar and the media group's operating partners reached multi-year agreements to renew **CW** network affiliations in 37 markets across the country. Combined the 37 markets cover more than 31% of the US audience, serving more than 38 million television households.

SEC FILING PARTICULARS

David Zaslav received stock options valued at \$190 million as part of his new employment agreement signed after the **Discovery-WarnerMedia** deal was announced. His base salary remains at \$3 million annually. His target annual bonus stays at \$22K. After 2021, it can exceed the target, subject to a cap of 125%. **Lionsgate** revealed in an SEC filing this week that Zaslav is stepping down from its board immediately. Meanwhile, **Qurate Retail** chair *Greg Maffei* has made an offer to acquire all of *John Malone's* outstanding shares of Series B common stock, according to an SEC filing. Malone has indicated he will accept offer, which appears to be about \$400 million.

FOX WEATHER ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP TEAM

Fox News Media named six executives to lead its upcoming AVOD streaming weather service, **Fox Weather**. *David Clark*, most recently svp, weekend programming at Fox News, will serve as svp and head of programming. *Steve Baron* was tapped as svp, digital product & strategy, and *Mike McClain* will serve as svp and gm, adding to his current role as gm of **WOFL/WRBW-TV FOX**. Rounding out the team are vp, programming development *Dianne Doctor*; vp, news operations *Tim Gaughan* and director and head, video operations and audience development *Deante Parker*.

LOCAL NOW STRIKES DEAL WITH SCRIPPS

Allen Media Group's free streaming platform **Local Now** reached an agreement with the **E.W. Scripps** company, adding 10 FAST channels to the platform. Local Now has more than 300 streaming channels including a Local Now channel in every DMA in the US. The Scripps deal provides localized news for markets such as Phoenix, Detroit and Salt Lake City.

DISCOVERY US HISPANIC UPFRONTS

Discovery US Hispanic's upfront slate features more than 2,500 new and original premieres across **Discovery en Español**, **Discovery Familia** and **Hogar de HGTV**. The programmer also boasted exclusive digital content available to over one million collective subscribers between **Discovery en Español GO** and **Discovery Familia GO**. Highlighted series and specials for Discovery en Español include "On The Roam" and "Getaway Driver," while favorites "Alaska: la última frontera" and "Mexicánicos" are set to return with new episodes. Discovery Familia's new titles include "Tu, yo y mi ex," while Hogar de HGTV boasts upcoming premieres such as "Estrellas de Hogar."

OTSP NOMINATION APPROVED

Senate Commerce approved President *Biden's* nomination of Dr *Eric Lander* to be the Director of the Office of Science and

Technology Policy by voice vote. Sen *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA), the committee chair, commended the elevation of the position to a Cabinet-level post and voiced her commitment to assist Lander in adding to the diversity in STEM fields. "Dr Lander and I have come to a focus and understanding that the very first task that you should focus on is helping all of us add diversity of women and minorities in the science field," Cantwell said.

MTV'S MENTAL HEALTH ACTION DAY

More than 1,300 orgs, brands, government agencies and cultural leaders are participating in **MTV Entertainment Group's** inaugural Mental Health Action Day. The open-source movement aims to motivate people to take action to get mental health support. On Thursday, coalition partners hosted a series of activations, ranging from public events featuring experts and activists to employee engagement activities to support the mental health needs of themselves and others.

GEORGE FLOYD ANNIVERSARY SPECIALS

May 25 marks the anniversary of the murder of *George Floyd*, with **BET** marking the date with the launch of social impact initiative, "Content for Change." The three-night event begins at 8pm Tuesday with "Bars and Ballads for George Floyd," an ensemble of musical and spoken word performances and commentary. Wednesday will see the premiere of commentary program "Justice Now: Race & Reckoning" featuring voices in politics, law enforcement, corporate America, Hollywood and sports. The event ends May 27 at 8pm with special "Justice Now: The Way Forward," featuring interviews examining the barriers to change impacting the Black community and meaningful solutions for a "post-George Floyd" America. – **OWN** and **Procter & Gamble** will launch a one-hour special at 8pm on Tuesday featuring short films and new content by Black creators that celebrate Black stories and Black life. The program is meant to honor the anniversary of the murder of *George Floyd*. The special will also include "These Hands," from the athlete empowerment brand created by *LeBron James* and *Maverick Carter*, in collaboration with P&G.

PROGRAMMING

"Hocus Pocus 2" will premiere exclusively on **Disney+** in 2022 with the original Sanderson sisters *Bette Midler*, *Sarah Jessica Parker* and *Kathy Najimy*. – Documentary "Fight the Power: The Movements That Changed America" premieres June 19 on **History Channel**. – "Motherland: Fort Salem" Season 2 premieres June 22 on **Freeform**. – **discovery+** greenlit home reno series "Trixie Motel" starring drag queen *Trixie Mattel* for an eight-episode season. The show will be available to stream in 2022. – Stop-motion series "Ultra City Smiths" will premiere with a six-episode first season on **AMC** this fall.

PEOPLE

Telemundo Global Studios promoted *Juan Ponce* to svp and gm, **Telemundo Streaming Studios**. Prior to joining **NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises** in 2016, Ponce was CEO and founder of Hispanic media startup **New Generation Media**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Don't Get 'Too Close'

What does it take for a woman to unravel and kill her children? How does she come to believe that's her best option? That's what writer and creator *Clara Salaman* asked herself when she got the idea for "Too Close," a three-episode psychological thriller premiering on **AMC+** Thursday. The show centers on the dangerous dynamic between forensic psychiatrist Dr Emma Robertson and Connie Mortensen. Connie has been accused of a monstrous crime, but claims to have forgotten everything. Salaman has a more concise description for Greek mythology and theater fans—a "suburban Medea story set in London." Medea is a Greek play by *Euripides*, based on and taking place after the myth of Medea and Jason of the Argonauts. In it, the pair has relocated to Corinth, when Jason leaves Medea for King Creon of Corinth's daughter. Medea exacts vengeance on her partner by killing her two sons by Jason as well as Creon and his daughter and then fleeing. Salaman says she's absolutely fascinated by the Medea story and is baffled by the instances in which women of a divorce enact a revenge killing. Should the men get the children, she assumes the table would turn and men would do the same. "Yet it is more extraordinary, a woman killing her child, because we carry them and we have that intimacy and the whole birth thing and everything, to end up killing your child," she said. Salaman believes the best thing that someone could take away from her story is to be more careful, and she's already gotten that sense from one individual reviewer. "She said that after watching it, she knew she had to take more care with everyone she came in contact with. So, the person behind the till or the person she's buying a drink from—she said she was going to be much more careful with strangers. I thought, 'that's great.' If you come away thinking that, great, mission accomplished!" – *Theresa Maher*

REVIEWS

"In Treatment," streaming Sunday, 9pm ET, **HBO**. Gosh, how we've missed this simple drama about the patient-psychiatrist relationship. Indeed, true to the first three seasons, which starred *Gabriel Byrne* as the therapist and last graced the airwaves in 2010, just about the entire series occurs in the therapist's office. In this case, the action, or more accurately the lack of it, occurs in the gorgeous LA home of Dr. Brooke Taylor (*Uzo Aduba*) or via computer screens (it's the pandemic, after all). It's a departure from the comfortable yet less sunny quarters of Byrne's Dr. Paul Weston. Unfairly, loyal viewers of IT's first three seasons will compare Aduba's less-guarded character with Byrne's avuncular yet ultimately remote Weston. Fortunately, Aduba is so strong an actor that such comparisons fall away quickly. Another fortunate element is that Dr. Taylor's patients are interesting. Perhaps seeking to attract a young-ish audience, two characters are late teens/early 20-somethings. *Anthony Ramos* as the highly intelligent Eladio offers tremendous promise. More stereotypical are *Quintessa Swindell* as a college-bound teen. Like IT's earlier seasons, each ep premieres on different days, making it seem like a patient's 'appointment' with Dr. Taylor. (Sorry, no snarky remarks about the series being 'appointment viewing,' too easy). Certainly, IT is an acquired pleasure. It's literally two talking heads. Ah, but there's plenty of magic. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(05/10/21-05/16/21)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.743	2,288
MSNBC	0.483	1,488
HGTV	0.388	1,195
CNN	0.297	915
TNT	0.273	840
DISC	0.256	787
HALL	0.249	767
INSP	0.244	751
ESPN	0.238	732
TBSC	0.232	716
USA	0.232	714
HIST	0.229	705
TLC	0.228	702
FOOD	0.224	690
ID	0.200	615
A&E	0.159	488
LIFE	0.153	471
HMM	0.150	463
BRAVO	0.146	449
TVLAND	0.145	445
ADSM	0.142	438
NATGEO	0.139	427
FX	0.134	413
WETV	0.134	412
GSN	0.130	399
AMC	0.122	377
BET	0.119	365
APL	0.114	351
TRAVEL	0.109	335
SYFY	0.106	325
FRFM	0.105	325
NAN	0.104	319
CRN	0.097	298
COM	0.094	289

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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Advertising Contact: **Ellen Kamhi, Director of Business Development**
917-626-5574 | ekamhi@accessintel.com

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