

**STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Good morning Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, Chairman Doyle, Ranking Member Latta and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is good to see you—in person.

While I have been before you many times, this is the first time as Chairwoman of the Federal Communications Commission. It is an honor to serve in this role at a time when the connections that unite us have never been more important. The pandemic has proven with clarity what this Committee and the Commission have long known to be true: Broadband access is essential for full participation in modern life. When we masked up and hunkered down, we relied on communications to stay working, stay healthy, stay informed, stay in school, stay in touch, and stay entertained. But as we leave this period, we need to acknowledge that the connected world we've relied on is not going away. High-speed internet access is no longer just nice-to-have. It is need-to-have for everyone, everywhere. For this reason, the Commission has been hard at work—using tools both new and old—to connect people to the broadband they now need for everyday life.

During the last year the agency mounted an extraordinary response to this crisis. With the help of Congress, we've established three historic efforts to bring reliable, affordable, high-speed internet to more people in more places.

First, in record time we launched the nation's largest-ever broadband affordability program. Last year we began by putting in place the Emergency Broadband Benefit. It provided eligible households monthly discounts to help pay for internet service and a one-time discount for a computer or tablet. That meant these families could keep up with work, apply for jobs, seek out healthcare, and get the information they need in the communities where they live. Then, earlier this year, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act gave the agency the authority to extend this effort and renamed it the Affordable Connectivity Program. Working on a tight timeframe, the agency set up this \$14.2 billion effort to extend the monthly discount available for a longer time and put in place new statutory criteria to reach more households. As a result, we now have more than 11 million households nationwide participating in the program. We're also at work identifying how to expand outreach with a rulemaking that is ongoing. And led by Commissioner Starks, we are working to develop an initiative to reach those in federal housing assistance communities and get even more households connected.

Second, in the past I've sat before you and described a problem I call the Homework Gap, the especially cruel digital divide between students who have access to the internet at home for their nightly schoolwork, and those who do not. You know who these children are because you see them lingering in the library parking lot to catch the free Wi-Fi signal for schoolwork and sliding into the booths at fast food restaurants to write their papers with a side of fries. During the pandemic the Homework Gap became an educational chasm. Students without broadband at home were locked out of the virtual classroom. But again, with your help the Commission was able to get kids connected and make a meaningful dent in the Homework Gap. The American Rescue Plan Act provided the agency with the authority to set up the Emergency Connectivity Fund. This is a \$7.17 billion program that supports schools and libraries nationwide, helping them get the internet service and devices they need to get online and fully participate in remote education. To date, the Commission has been able to use this program to support more than 12 million students.

Third, the Commission recently wrapped up awards for its historic COVID-19 Telehealth program. With funding from both the CARES Act and Consolidated Appropriations Act, the agency awarded just under \$450 million in support for telemedicine efforts during the pandemic. During the last round of funding, the agency made it a priority to ensure that these funds reached every state and territory in the country. They have been used to provide equipment and services that hospitals use to remotely diagnose and evaluate patients as well as enhance the telehealth services they provide on-site. In addition, the agency has committed over \$98 million to support expanded healthcare monitoring programs using new technologies through its Connected Care Pilot Program, an initiative promoted by Commissioner Brendan Carr. With these efforts, the Commission has expanded access to quality care using connections that help make it available where it is safe and convenient.

These programs are expanding connections and improving lives for households across the country. But we are also using this moment to build a foundation for growth and opportunity in a post-pandemic world. This effort includes our recent work to expand the wireless economy in order to create jobs, promote competition, and advance both prosperity and equity. To this end, we've moved aggressively to free up wireless spectrum for new 5G services. Earlier this year we concluded a successful auction of 100 megahertz of prime-mid-band spectrum in the 3.45 GHz band. Just last week, I announced that we will hold another mid-band auction, featuring the 2.5 GHz band, starting in July, following our special effort to award more than 355 licenses in this band for broadband deployment on rural Tribal lands. We also identified spectrum for the first time to support increased competition among commercial space launch providers and launch sites, which will help promote the space industry overall. This is a key part of our ongoing effort to modernize spectrum policy to meet the needs of the next-generation Space Age. We're also making sure our first responders reap the benefits of new wireless capabilities by updating our approach to the 4.9 GHz band. To make sure public safety has the updated emergency communications systems they need, I have put forward a plan that recommends when Congress authorizes an extension of the Commission's wireless auction authority it simultaneously commits to having those auction revenues support the much-needed nationwide upgrade to next generation 911. And with wireless we're also doing something new—next month we will kick off a proceeding to explore the role receivers have in spectrum efficiency and use. On this last effort, I want to thank Commissioner Simington for his support and interest in this area.

However, I recognize that the Commission cannot do all this wireless work alone. Now more than ever, we need a whole-of-government approach to our spectrum policy—one that promotes safety and security but is open to commercial innovation and opportunity. That’s why, last month, Assistant Secretary Alan Davidson and I announced a new Spectrum Coordination Initiative. Going forward, the Commission will work together with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to strengthen the processes for decision making and information sharing on spectrum issues. That way, we can revitalize the interagency process so that it once again is able to produce results for consumers and for the economy. I’m happy to announce that the agencies have already started work to reinstate high-level meetings, update the Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies, consult on a national spectrum strategy, compile science and engineering best practices, and revamp technical collaboration.

During the past year, under my leadership the Commission also has made it a priority to increase trust and security in our communications networks. We kicked off the nation’s first inquiry into Open RAN systems, to foster a market for more diverse and secure communications equipment. We launched a first-of-its kind program to remove insecure equipment from two Chinese vendors to the extent it is present in our domestic network today. We proposed rules to update our equipment authorization practices to better align them with national security policies. We took a closer look at the foreign ownership of telecommunications companies providing service in the United States and revoked the authorizations of four companies because our national security agencies had determined that they could be subject to exploitation, influence, and control by a foreign government. We rechartered the Communications, Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council with a 5G focus, and for the first time this group is being chaired by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. And last week, we updated our list of communications equipment and services that pose an unacceptable risk to national security and may not be used in our universal service programs.

In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, we’ve joined CISA in their Shields Up initiative, required new on-air disclosures for foreign-backed broadcasts, launched an internal assessment of Russian ownership of telecommunications interests in the United States, and started an inquiry into Border Gateway Protocol security to explore internet routing vulnerabilities. Next month, I will convene the first principals-level meeting of the Cybersecurity Forum for Independent and Executive Branch Regulators, to better coordinate the government’s response to evolving cyber threats. I also have traveled and held meetings with my international counterparts to support the United States candidate for the Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union, Doreen Bogdan Martin, who I believe is the right person to lead this organization at this time.

Last but certainly not least, the Commission is focused on consumers. I’ve often said our programs are built household by household, person by person. And it’s true. When a mom enrolls in the Affordable Connectivity Program and can pay for groceries *and* her internet bill that month, I know we’re on the right track. When a student who couldn’t get online, could now receive service or a computer through the Emergency Connectivity Fund, that means we’re making a difference. And when we bring more transparency to the prices and plans consumers consider when purchasing internet service, that means consumers can make informed choices

about the service they pay for. Our efforts to establish a broadband nutrition label for consumers is one way we are meeting consumers where they are and providing them with tools to help make the best decision about high-speed internet services for themselves and their families. But that's not all we're doing. We also have updated our rules to support broadband competition for households who reside in multi-tenant environments like apartments by putting an end to exclusive deals cut by landlords or building owners that can deny tenants the benefit of broadband choice. To make sure consumers have access to networks when they need them most, we are revisiting our policies for network resiliency, an effort spurred by Hurricane Ida and bolstered by a hearing we held with public safety experts. On top of this, we have modernized our policies to focus on the most vulnerable, updating the new 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline number so that it can take not only calls, but texts. Finally, we have recognized the importance of fundamental issues of communications equity for all consumers and have started an agency-wide proceeding to address digital discrimination, consistent with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. We are looking forward to making progress in this area, aided by the agency's Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination and the Communications Equity and Diversity Council.

I believe the work of the Commission has never been more important and I am proud of the work we have done to strengthen the networks that connect us. In all that we do the agency is aided by an uncommonly talented staff. Over the course of the last year, we have accomplished a lot. Nevertheless, I know much work remains and a full Commission is an important part of helping achieve those results.

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today. I look forward to any questions you may have.