

**STATEMENT OF  
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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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Chair McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone, Chair Latta, Ranking Member Matsui, Vice Chair Carter and Members of the Subcommittee - thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Since I appeared before you last year, a lot has happened at the Federal Communications Commission. Over the past year, as the pandemic eased, I had the opportunity to get out of Washington and spend more time in more places across the country. To understand and appreciate why the agency's work matters, there's just no substitute for meeting people where they live and work. The pandemic proved with clarity what this Committee and Commission have long known to be true: broadband access is essential for full participation in modern life. From New York to California, Texas to Michigan, and everywhere in between, the connected world we have come to rely on isn't going away. High-speed internet access is no longer just a nice-to-have; it's a need-to-have for everyone, everywhere. This connectivity fuels our economy and is fundamental to U.S. leadership on a global stage.

Across the board, the agency has turned down the volume and ramped up the work. So let me highlight ten things we have been working on.

First, the Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program, the largest broadband affordability program in our nation's history now helps more than 18 million households pay for high-speed internet service. Across the country, I have met with people who have been able to get online and stay connected thanks to this program. With success comes responsibility. Our current projections indicate that our appropriated funds to continue this program and keep these households connected could run out within a year. I strongly support funding the Affordable Connectivity Program into the future to help more families get and stay connected to the high-speed internet they need to participate in modern life.

Second, the FCC is fighting for consumers by promoting clarity and competition. One-third of people in this country live in multi-tenant units like apartments, which often offer limited choices when it comes to internet service because landlords cut exclusive deals and shut out competition. To improve competition and consumer choice, the Commission adopted rules to prohibit these kickbacks that keep out competitors and to improve access to in-building wiring. The Commission also adopted and released the new Broadband Label that providers will display at point-of-sale to enable consumers to easily shop for services among different providers and plans. And just last week, I put before my colleagues a new proposal to look at data caps and how they impact consumers and competition. When we need access to the internet, we aren't

thinking about how much data it takes to complete a task, we just know it needs to get done. It's time the FCC took a fresh look.

Third, the agency's work to create the National Broadband Map—the most accurate broadband map ever created--will help close the digital divide. For decades, the Commission produced broadband maps based on Census blocks. In practice, this meant that if there was high-speed internet service in a single location in a Census block, the agency assumed there was service throughout the area. Needless to say, this methodology overstated service nationwide. Following the Broadband DATA Act, in November 2022, the FCC developed its first location-based broadband map to paint a more accurate picture of where broadband is and is not available across the United States. And we just updated it again on May 30. This new map identifies every household and small business in the country that should have access to high-speed internet service. For context, on how much more granular this is than what came before, in our current mapping effort the Commission identified over 114 million locations where fixed broadband could be installed compared to data from just 8.1 million Census blocks in our prior maps. We will keep iterating and improving this map and look forward to using this data to help efforts all over this country to bring broadband to everyone, everywhere.

Fourth, the Commission is working to connect the most vulnerable. This past February, the Commission took steps to implement the Safe Connections Act championed by members of this committee. Under this new law, the Commission now has authority to help survivors of domestic abuse to swiftly and securely separate from communications contracts like family plans. It also sets up a way for survivors to receive emergency communications support from Lifeline or the Affordable Connectivity Program for up to six months.

We are also implementing the Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act. Because those in prison are often separated from their families by hundreds of miles and families may lack the time and means to make regular visits. Phone calls are the only way to stay connected. But when the price of a single phone call can be as much as most of us spend for unlimited monthly plans, it can be hard to stay in touch. This is not just a strain on the household budget. It harms all of us because regular contact with kin can reduce recidivism. We are going to use this new law and the expanded authority it provides to ensure the rates for prison phone calls—both interstate and intrastate—are just and reasonable. We are going to use it to address advanced communications services like video. And we are going to use it to ensure access to these communications by those with disabilities. Along the way, we will work to integrate these new efforts with what we have done before, so that across the board these policies are fair and sustainable.

In addition, earlier this month, we took steps to make the video conferencing services that have become ubiquitous more accessible to people with disabilities.

Fifth, we are doubling down on our efforts to stop scam robocalls and robotexts. Robocalls and robotexts aren't just exasperating, they are a pathway for fraudsters to harm consumers. So, we have been attacking them from all angles—cutting off bad actors from our networks, requiring providers to block unwanted calls, and mandating technology to stop call

spoofing. Some of our efforts are beginning to bear fruit. After we identified the companies behind the auto warranty robocall scam, we told the rest of the industry to cut them off and auto warranty calls fell by 90 percent. We used the same method to reduce student loan scam calls by 88 percent. We now have a memorandum of understanding with Attorneys General from 44 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam to work together to go after illegal robocalls. I also have asked Congress for some new authorities to win this fight against robocalls. We need to fix the definition of “autodialer” because the Supreme Court’s current interpretation may lead to less consumer protection from unwanted robocalls and robotexts. And we need the authority to collect our own robocall fines and the authority to look at financial records so we can break up rings of scammers without them getting a heads up we are coming for them.

Sixth, the Commission is helping connect people to emergency services. This July is the first anniversary of 988- the three-digit, easy-to-remember number you can dial to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Thanks in part to the Commission’s work, if you text or dial 988, you will now be connected to professional, compassionate support for mental health emergencies. Last month, we saw a 45 percent increase in people using the Lifeline, compared to May 2022 numbers. That’s 160,000 more people seeking and receiving help in just one month. This is a really big deal that is going to save a lot of lives.

And this year we began an effort to enhance the availability of Wireless Emergency Alerts, starting with making them available in more languages. We launched this effort after New York State Attorney General Letitia James brought our attention to the fact that nearly all of those who lost their lives during Hurricane Ida spoke languages other than English and Spanish. But we’re not stopping with more languages, we are also proposing changes to increase transparency and participation in Wireless Emergency Alerts along with performance information like reliability, speed, and location accuracy.

Seventh, the Commission is doing more than ever before to keep your communications secure. Under my strategy of “deter, defend, develop”: deter bad actors, defend against untrusted vendors, and develop a market for trustworthy innovation, the Commission has taken a number of actions to protect our networks. Recently, the Commission adopted my proposal to regularly review foreign companies’ authorizations to provide telecommunications services in the United States. This is just one of a number of clear and decisive actions the FCC has taken to address national security risks in our communications networks. For example, we have worked with our national security counterparts to publish and update the first-ever FCC list of communications and services that pose an unacceptable risk to national security. The FCC’s rules prohibit the use of federal funds to purchase equipment or services on the Covered List. But the list does more than that—it provides companies making their own purchasing decisions clear signals about the security of products in the marketplace.

Beyond national security, we are working to keep your personal data secure. The twin forces of always-on connectivity and the monetization of your personal data have never been so intertwined. In 2020, the FCC took an enforcement action against wireless carriers for selling and sharing customer geolocation data. I’ve asked my colleagues to vote for Forfeiture Orders to close out this enforcement action and impose fines for these violations. And just last week, I

announced the first-ever Privacy and Data Protection Task Force at the Commission. The Task Force will have input in several ongoing efforts, including modernizing the agency's data breach rules and cracking down on SIM-swapping fraud. The digital-age privacy challenges we face are not going away, and we need to face them with new vigor.

Eighth, we are working to make our networks more resilient. Last year, I traveled to Florida and Puerto Rico to survey the recovery efforts of Ian and Fiona, which we followed up with a virtual field hearing on hurricanes and communications. And I had the opportunity to learn from public safety officials in Louisiana. Thanks to these initiatives, we've learned lessons we can apply. We have updated our rules to improve the reliability and resiliency of wireless networks during emergencies. We launched the Mandatory Disaster Response Initiative, which promotes service continuity through coordination, assistance, and information sharing during emergencies and disasters. And we opened up our Network Outage Reporting Systems and Disaster Information Reporting System for sharing with Federal, state, Tribal and territory access. Sharing this information will enhance the ability of these agencies to respond more rapidly to outages and help save lives.

And we are already active in our preparation for the 2023 hurricane season, including co-hosting a workshop last week in Puerto Rico with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Energy, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and the Puerto Rico Governor's Office, to improve coordination between the communications and energy sectors during disaster response and restoration.

Ninth, we are doing our part to keep pace with the rapid development of the satellite sector and the growing importance of space-based communications. This year, I established a new Space Bureau to promote long-term technical capacity to address satellite policies and improve our coordination with other agencies on these issues. And the Commission is preparing for the coming convergence of satellite and terrestrial communications in 6G. We call it the Single Network Future because we believe next generation communications will combine traditional ground-based airwaves with satellite signals. The FCC kicked this effort off with a rulemaking to explore how to support direct satellite-to-smartphone communication and bring our spectrum policies into a converged future.

We also took action to care for our skies and promote strength and sustainability in the space community. Our space economy is moving fast. With an eye to the future, we adopted rules that shorten the period to deorbit satellites in low-Earth orbit at the end of their operations from 25 to five years.

Tenth—last but not least-- we are finding more ways to use spectrum to support wireless communications into the future. We are working to free up more spectrum to serve as a launching pad for new technologies. We have already identified the 7-16 GHz band as prime mid-band airwaves for 5G, 6G and beyond. That is why I proposed making 550 megahertz of spectrum in the 12.7-13.25 GHz band available for new commercial mobile use. And we're not stopping there, the FCC is already looking to what a 6G future could look like including its impact on the digital divide, machine learning, how it could make life easier and more efficient

for consumers, and new ways to connect industries, technology, and communities. Those communities include Tribal communities, and as a result of our work in the 2.5 GHz band, today more than 80 percent of Federally-recognized Tribes have licensed spectrum. That is real change—and real opportunity.

Unlocking the promise of 6G will require planning and coordination. As we plan for this future in the United States, we also need to be mindful of the spectrum demands in the present. And one thing that absolutely needs to happen is the restoration of the FCC's spectrum auction authority. For three decades the FCC has had the authority to auction off airwaves to commercial actors to use to deploy, create, and innovate. But on March 9 of this year, that authority expired for the first time. As this Committee knows, if this is not corrected, it could have a tremendous impact. Over the past three decades, the FCC has held 100 spectrum auctions and, in the process, raised more than \$233 billion for the United States Treasury.

Restoring this authority will provide the United States with the strongest foundation to compete in a global economy, counter our adversaries' technology ambitions, and safeguard our national security. Most importantly, we cannot afford to wait. The global wireless community is convening for the World Radiocommunication Conference at the end of this year. It is where we set the future of spectrum policy. Restoring the FCC's auction authority is the first step in doing that, and it is my hope we can do it soon. And when we do, let's think about building a new spectrum pipeline that that can carry us to 6G.

So that's ten things the FCC is doing to bring high-speed connectivity to everyone, everywhere that is secure, resilient, and ready for the future. Thank you for the opportunity to join you today to share these details about the Commission's ongoing work. I look forward to your questions.