STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
DECEMBER 12, 2013

Good morning, Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Eshoo, and members of the Subcommittee. It is an honor to appear before you today in the company of my colleagues—new and old—at the Federal Communications Commission.

By some measures, communications technologies account for one-sixth of the economy. No wonder. These are the networks that carry all aspects of our modern commercial and civic life. They are changing at a breathtaking pace. Keeping up requires taking a fresh look at our policies. Informed by the values of the past, we must think boldly about the future.

In the weeks ahead we will do this as we wrestle with the transition to Internet Protocol and lay the groundwork for upcoming spectrum auctions, including incentive auctions.

But I think we make a mistake if we focus only on networks themselves. After all, there is great beauty and power in what we can do with them. Our new networks can change the ways we connect, create, and conduct commerce. They can change the ways we learn and the ways we seek security.

In my brief time before you today, this is what I want to talk about—how the broadband beneath us and the airwaves all around us can improve education and improve public safety.

First, I want to talk about the E-Rate program. E-Rate helps connect schools and libraries across the country to the Internet. It is a byproduct of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Remember 1996? All of us here probably called the Internet the "information superhighway." It was a long time ago.

In 1996, only 14 percent of public schools were connected to the Internet. Today, that number is north of 95 percent. That sounds good. It sounds like the job is done. But nothing could be further from the truth. Because the challenge today is not connection—it is capacity.

Too many of our E-Rate schools access the Internet at speeds as low as 3 Megabits. That is too slow for streaming high-definition video. It is not fast enough for the most innovative teaching tools. It is not fast enough to prepare the next generation with the science, technology, engineering, and math—or STEM—skills that are so essential to compete.

Contrast this with efforts underway in some of our world neighbors. In South Korea, 100 percent of schools are connected to high-speed broadband and all schools are converting to digital textbooks by 2016. Ireland will have all schools connected to 100 Megabits next year. Finland will have all schools connected to 100 Megabits the year after that. Meanwhile, in both

Turkey and Thailand the government is seeking a vendor to supply tablet computers to millions of students for a new era of digital learning.

We can wait and see where the status quo takes us and let other nations lead the way. Or we can choose a future where all American students have the access to broadband they need to compete, no matter who they are, where they live, or where they go to school.

I think it is time to compete. I think it is time for E-Rate 2.0. The FCC has a rulemaking proceeding underway to reboot and recharge the E-Rate program. I think we need to make this a priority. I think we need to find ways to bring 100 Megabits to all schools in the near term and 1 Gigabit to all schools in the long term. While we are at it, we must find ways to reduce the bureaucracy of this program—and make it easier for small and rural schools to participate.

Second, I want to talk about a number all of us know by heart, but none of us ever hopes to use. I want to talk about 9-1-1. In my time at the FCC, I have visited 9-1-1 call centers across the country. I am always struck by the steely calm of those who answer the phones and help ensure that help is on the way.

I am also struck by how many emergency calls now come in from wireless phones. In fact, nationwide more than 70 percent of all calls to 9-1-1 are made from wireless phones. That is over 400,000 calls per day.

If you use your wireless phone to call 9-1-1 from outdoors, your location is reported, sometimes to within 50 meters under FCC location accuracy standards.

But if you use your wireless phone to call 9-1-1 from indoors, you should cross your fingers, because no FCC location accuracy standards apply.

This is an unacceptable gap in our communications. It deserves your attention—and ours. Because no matter where you are when you call 9-1-1, you want first responders to find you. Moreover, as our networks evolve, and the ways we use them change, we must make sure our public safety policies keep pace.

In fact, our approaches to networks—both wired and wireless—need to evolve as markets evolve. But in our efforts, we must not lose sight of why networks matter. Because they can do more than connect us, they can strengthen education and enhance our security—and of course, grow our economy in new and exciting ways.

Thank you. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.