

**Opening Statement of Representative Debbie Dingell
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology**

Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2025 Federal Communications Commission Budget”

July 9, 2024

We are here today conducting important oversight of the Federal Communications Commission and its budget for the upcoming year.

I commend the FCC, under the leadership of Chairwoman Rosenworcel, for putting the American people at the heart of every decision it has made over the last three years.

The FCC has consistently prioritized work to protect consumers, promote public safety, and enhance national security in our communications sector, leading the way toward a digital future that is safe and secure for all Americans. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the FCC’s adoption of net neutrality protections. This action corrected the Trump-era FCC’s misguided rollback of commonsense rules for an open internet. I strongly support the reinstatement of this authority. I am pleased the agency rectified a massive dereliction of its duty and extended bedrock consumer protections to broadband internet access that our nation has always applied to communications services. The FCC’s action will result in greater oversight over internet providers to mitigate network outages, resolve broadband consumer complaints, prevent anti-consumer and anti-competitive practices, and protect our national security.

The FCC is also playing major role in the implementation of the broadband investments President Biden and Congressional Democrats delivered as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. In May, the FCC released its fourth major update to the National Broadband Map, which serves as the backbone of the historic \$42 billion investment to bring high-speed, affordable broadband to communities overlooked for too long. Not one Republican on this Subcommittee voted in favor of that bill, and yet they continue to attack it and jeopardize its success at every opportunity.

We are also likely to hear ridiculous attacks from Republican Commissioners today against the implementation of the BEAD Program. These attacks fail to recognize that this is the largest investment in broadband deployment in our nation’s history and we want to make sure we get it right. I would think we would all agree with that. These attacks are only going to hurt communities throughout the entire nation that have either been unserved or underserved for too long.

As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we also created the Affordable Connectivity Program, which has made broadband more affordable for more than 23 million American families. I commend the FCC for successfully implementing this program and working to get eligible families signed up. Unfortunately, the House Republican leadership allowed the program to lapse last month, leaving all of these families with the difficult decision of paying higher internet bills every month or losing service all together.

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Extending the popular Affordable Connectivity Program should be something that Democrats and Republicans can agree on—after all, it benefits red and blue districts alike, including rural, urban, and suburban communities.

I would also like to commend Chairwoman Rosenworcel for recently proposing that any political ads containing content generated using artificial intelligence (AI) must disclose that fact. This proposed requirement will help viewers better understand how political campaigns are attempting to influence them. I appreciate the Chairwoman's efforts on this subject and will continue to support efforts to increase transparency around campaign ads and the use of AI.

Finally, I have to say, that I am increasingly concerned about extreme Republican efforts to destroy agencies like the FCC and the important role it plays on behalf of the public in overseeing critical services like our communications networks. These Republican attacks against our federal agencies would be devastating for consumers and would only help already powerful companies to increase their profits even more.

Trump's Project 2025 Plan—authored in part by a Republican Commissioner before us today—would exacerbate these consumer harms by eliminating expert agencies, gutting the Civil Service, and consolidating power under the President. This will have serious negative consequences for Americans, leading to higher prices, lower quality services, and decreased safety and security. We simply cannot allow that to happen.

Rather than spending this time and energy attacking the FCC and plotting to undermine the agency in the future, Republicans should be working with us to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable high-speed internet access. We should also continue our bipartisan work to restore spectrum authority that expired earlier this year for the first time in the program's 30-year history. And we should continue our bipartisan efforts to remove hardware from our communications networks that compromises our national security.

I appreciate the FCC's work in protecting American consumers and thank the commissioners for being here today. I yield back the balance of my time.