

**SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & COMMERCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**“THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION AGENCY
BUDGET”**

JULY 9, 2024

As Commissioner, I’ve traveled across the country to meet with consumers, industry leaders, advocacy groups, and local elected officials to learn about their communications needs. I heard stories that highlight the mission of the FCC to ensure these services are accessible to all Americans. High-speed Internet service is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. The importance of digital connectivity in the daily lives of Americans is what makes the funding lapse of the bipartisan Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) so concerning. The ACP is the most successful tool Congress has ever provided to close the digital divide. The FCC has recently taken noteworthy consumer-focused actions on the Cyber Trust Mark, multilingual Wireless Emergency Alerts (or WEAs), a new emergency alert code dedicated to help find adults that have gone missing and would not be reported through existing alerts, implantation of the Safe Connections Act, unwanted robocalls and robotexts, and rules to protect the Open Internet. I have also represented the FCC in conversations in international fora. To maintain our leadership on the global stage and innovation in wireless technology, Congressional action to re-establish the FCC’s auction authority is needed. I look forward to collaborating with federal partners, State, local, and Tribal leaders, stakeholders, and the communications industry as I continue my service.

**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & COMMERCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**“THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION AGENCY
BUDGET”**

JULY 9, 2024

Good morning, Chair McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone, Chair Latta, Ranking Member Matsui, and members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before you today.

In the past nine months, I’ve had the privilege of traveling across the country to meet with consumers, industry leaders, advocacy groups, and local elected officials to learn about their communications needs. During my visits, I heard compelling stories that highlight the importance of communications services in daily life and the mission of the FCC to ensure these services are accessible to every member of our society.

We know that high-speed Internet service is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. During a visit to the Orlando Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VA), in Florida, I learned that 80% of medical treatments veterans use for recovery requires a broadband connection. A veteran from Orlando and representative of Paralyzed Veterans of America told me that connectivity is essential for veterans, and particularly veterans who are disabled, to obtain healthcare, job opportunities, and VA benefits.

The importance of digital connectivity in the daily lives of Americans is what makes the funding lapse of the bipartisan Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) so concerning.

Thanks to the ACP, over 23 million households across the United States benefited from support for high-speed Internet connectivity. As of June 1, when funding lapsed, those households lost support for the connectivity they need for work, school, and health care. While some Internet providers have voluntarily stepped up to provide limited free or lower cost service, these are temporary salves, and absent action families still will face rising bills and disconnection with potentially devastating consequences.

The ACP is the most successful tool Congress has ever provided to close the digital divide. The ACP benefited every corner of the country and it connected communities historically on the wrong side of the digital divide. The end of this program threatens the significant progress we have made toward achieving connectivity for all. In addition, I worry that we risk failing to maximize the \$42.5 billion bipartisan investment in broadband infrastructure through the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program.

Connectivity has never been more important. From being able to keep up with school and staying connected with family and friends, to helping rural businesses reach larger markets, to ensuring veterans can access the medical care they need to successfully re-enter civilian life, modern daily life requires a reliable connection to the Internet.

Beyond connectivity, I want to make sure that all consumers are served by and informed about the FCC's actions, and I am focused on understanding where outreach, education, and engagement can make a difference in their lives.

I would like to highlight a few noteworthy consumer-focused actions that the Commission has taken recently.

The FCC established the Cybersecurity Trust Mark, a logo that manufacturers can voluntarily affix to wireless internet-connected products, indicating that the product has met

cybersecurity standards. The Cyber Trust Mark will help consumers make sense of the myriad connected products we use in our daily lives.

We also now require that Wireless Emergency Alerts (or WEAs) reach consumers in 13 languages and American Sign Language. Ensuring that people can receive life-saving emergency information in the language and format they understand will help save lives. We proposed to establish a new emergency alert code dedicated to help find adults that have gone missing and would not be reported through existing alerts. I am hopeful that this tool can bring comfort to families by helping to locate missing adults and in particular will help to address the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous persons, a topic I discussed with the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe. We have also implemented Congress's direction in the Safe Connections Act by requiring mobile phone providers to separate the line of a survivor of domestic abuse from that of their abuser when the survivor requests it. And we continue to take actions to address unwanted robocalls and robotexts.

Additionally, the Commission reinstated rules to protect the Open Internet. Broadband Internet access is too important, too essential to the safety, economy, health, education, and well-being of this country not to have any guardrails in place. Consumers deserve to trust that the FCC is working to ensure that broadband Internet access service remains open, fast, reliable, and fair.

From robocalls to spectrum licenses, much of our work domestically is tied to our work internationally. As Commissioner, I have represented the FCC in conversations with multiple counterparts in Dubai, South Africa, Barcelona, and here in D.C.

From these engagements, it is clear that the thirst for wireless innovation is global. We have been global leaders in wireless innovation and made spectrum auctions the gold standard

for assigning this finite resource. But every month that passes by without auction authority our leadership on the global stage and innovation in wireless technology domestically is held back. We must continue to foster innovation to meet our wireless needs, and that requires Congressional action to re-establish the FCC's auction authority.

The conversations I've had over the last nine months have given me a greater appreciation for the critical role the Commission plays in the lives of Americans. I want to read you a message I received from a young mother:

I am writing to you as a mother of two that really depends on having Internet on the ACP to be able to work, to find work and to educate them. I know it's asking a lot for you to consider keeping this and try to find funding for it...I don't have much to my name, everything I have is negative standings right now. If you can manage to find a way, or maybe change somebody's mind so that the funding doesn't end.

When I think about the mission of the FCC, I think about what is at stake for Americans like this young mother. This is why we exist.

In my short tenure, the Commission has accomplished quite a lot. But there remains much work to do. I am honored to have the opportunity to serve the people of the United States as an FCC Commissioner, and I would like to thank Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Starks, Commissioner Simington, and the FCC staff for their collegiality. I look forward to collaborating with you, federal partners, State, local, and Tribal leaders, stakeholders, and the communications industry as I continue my service.

Thank you.