

**STATEMENT OF
JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
CHAIRWOMAN
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JULY 9, 2024**

Chair McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone, Chair Latta, Ranking Member Matsui, Vice Chair Weber 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. I welcome this opportunity to report on the agency’s mission, workload, and achievements and how our Fiscal Year 2025 budget request supports those efforts. The work of the Commission matters. Communications technologies power one-sixth of the Nation’s economy—and everyone needs access to these technologies to have a fair shot at our digital future. This connectivity fuels our economy and is fundamental to U.S. leadership on a global stage.

As a fee-funded agency, the Commission has worked hard to develop a reasonable budget request that maximizes benefits to the public, while remaining fair to industries responsible for our requested funding level of \$448,075,000. This amount will ensure that the Commission can meet its statutory mandates and uphold the core values of our laws—consumer protection, universal service, national security, and public safety—all while keeping pace with ever-changing and advancing technologies.

Under my leadership, the Commission has strived to build a digital future that works for everyone, everywhere. To that end, let me highlight some of the agency’s work.

First, the Commission is working to connect everyone, which is essential for our digital future.

The Commission’s Affordable Connectivity Program, the largest broadband affordability program in our Nation’s history, helped 23 million households—more than one in six nationwide—pay for high-speed internet service. Across the country, I have met with people who were able to get online and stay online thanks to this program for work, school, healthcare, and more. As you all know, Congress provided the funds for this program through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity to note that that funding to keep these households connected was exhausted in May. I strongly support efforts to identify ways to continue to fund 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 the digital future, and I stand ready to assist in any way I can.

While the Commission was forced to shut off support for the Affordable Connectivity

Program earlier this year, next week, I will ask my colleagues to support an order that would allow every library and school library in the country to loan out Wi-Fi hotspots to keep their patrons and kids connected. Whether by reviving the just-lapsed ACP or modernizing E-Rate, we need to pursue every avenue to ensure connectivity and opportunity for all.

Second, the Commission has worked to protect consumers and enhance competition. In April, we took steps to ensure that the Nation's expert in communications has basic oversight over the most essential communications network of our time, and that every consumer has internet access that is fast, open, and fair by reinstating net neutrality policies.

And in the same month, broadband providers began displaying the new Broadband Label to enable consumers to easily shop for services among different providers and plans.

We also recently launched the U.S. Cyber Trust Mark. This voluntary program invites Internet of Things manufacturers to apply for a cybersecurity label. Just like the "Energy Star" logo helps consumers know which devices are energy efficient, the Cyber Trust Mark will help us make informed choices about the security of the connected devices we bring into our homes.

Finally, next week I will ask my colleagues to vote on a proposal regarding the unlocking of wireless handsets. Unlocking handsets allows consumers to take their existing mobile phone with them when they switch from one wireless service provider to another. This makes switching service providers easier and promotes competition.

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 Commission 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. 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 115 million locations where fixed broadband could be installed compared to data from just 8.1 million Census blocks in our prior maps. At the direction of Congress, this map supports the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's \$42.5 billion investment in deploying high-speed broadband nationwide. However, to keep iterating and improving this map's accuracy and to continue to use this data to help efforts all over this country to bring broadband to everyone, everywhere, the Commission's budget request includes a \$30 million increase to its base to support the agency's Broadband Data Collection. Now that the directly appropriated funding for that effort has been exhausted, the Commission needs to include the necessary resources for the National Broadband Map in its budget. Given the time, effort and money that went into getting it going, and the accountability for our Nation's broadband programs that depend on it, we need to make certain that we have the resources to continue to update and maintain our maps into the future.

Fourth, we are working to build an inclusive digital future by making connectivity more accessible. Last year, we kicked off a proceeding make the video conferencing services that have become ubiquitous more accessible to people with disabilities. And next week, Commission will be voting on rules to improve video programming accessibility for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Over the past year, we have furthered our effort to enhance the availability of Wireless Emergency Alerts, starting with making them available in more than a dozen languages, including American Sign Language. 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.

Fifth, we are working to connect the most vulnerable. Last year, 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 for up to six months. This year we launched a proceeding to explore how the Safe Connections Act could be used to ensure car manufacturers and wireless service providers are taking steps to assist and safeguard survivors of domestic violence when connected cars are used to stalk and abuse.

And in March, we proposed to add a new “Missing and Endangered Persons” alert code to the nation’s Emergency Alert System to help law enforcement provide timely alerts to galvanize public attention to missing native and indigenous persons, as well as other groups. Law enforcement agencies have successfully used AMBER alerts on TV and radio to mobilize public attention and recover abducted children. We do not have a similar code dedicated to missing and endangered adults, particularly the thousands of missing native and indigenous women who have disappeared, never to be seen again. Creating this new code could close this gap and help save lives.

Sixth, we are connecting families. Later this month, we will vote to implement the Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act, which will significantly lower rates for phone calls from prisons and set rates for video calls for the first time. For many incarcerated people and their families, 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. Our new rules will ensure that the rates for prison phone calls—both interstate and intrastate—are just and reasonable.

Seventh, the Commission is doing more than ever before to keep your communications more 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 from national security threats. For the first time in history, we have revoked the authorization to provide telecommunications services in the United States, for four Chinese communications providers. This action will soon include broadband, and not just voice service. In May, we voted on a bipartisan basis to begin a rulemaking to require that broadband providers prepare

confidential plans to mitigate internet routing vulnerabilities, which the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice have disclosed have allowed China Telecom to route U.S. internet traffic to China.

On top of this, we continue to work to implement the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program to remove Huawei and ZTE equipment in our communications networks. This is important for our domestic security and also sends a signal to the world that going forward we will not support insecure equipment in essential infrastructure. Congress provided \$1.9 billion to operate the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Unfortunately, as this Committee knows well, this amount is not enough to secure our networks; we currently face a more than \$3.08 billion shortfall to fully reimburse participating carriers for removal, replacement and disposal of the problematic equipment. Unless we receive an additional appropriation, we can only provide forty cents on the dollar to those companies in reimbursement, which threatens our national security and risks the shutdown of rural networks.

Eighth, 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 over 90 percent. We used the same method to reduce student loan scam calls by 88 percent. And because this is a problem that requires coordination among law enforcement, we now have a memorandum of understanding with Attorneys General from 49 states. This partnership with states has already born fruit. In February, the Commission acted swiftly and unanimously to make AI-generated voices in robocalls illegal, giving state Attorneys General a new tool to go after voice cloning scams. And we worked with the New Hampshire Attorney General to find the consultant who used AI to impersonate President Biden in a robocall before the New Hampshire primary, shut down the calls, and hold the consultant and the carrier who stood behind the calls accountable.

Ninth, we are doing our part to keep pace with rapid development of the satellite sector and the growing importance of space-based communications. The space industry has entered an era of unprecedented growth, which is fueling an increase in both the complexity and the number of applications for space services before the Commission. That is why I created the agency's Space Bureau, which has already completed its first year of hard work. In the past year, the Commission has adopted new rules to streamline our satellite policies and expedite the processing of space and earth station applications as well as a new licensing framework for commercial space launches. And the Commission has established a new framework for the coming convergence of satellite and terrestrial convergence—we call it Single Network Future.

And 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 Commission is already looking to what a 6G future could look like including its impact on the digital divide, artificial intelligence, how it could make life easier and more efficient for consumers, and new ways it could 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.

But as we plan for the future, 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 Commission's spectrum auction authority. For three decades we have had the authority to auction off airwaves to commercial actors to use to deploy, create, and innovate. The agency has led the world in innovative spectrum policy, and held a first-of-its-kind incentive auction. Since I last sat before you at a hearing, we even won an Emmy for it!

But more than a year ago, on March 9, 2023, 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 Commission 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.

So those are some of the things the Commission is doing to build a digital future that works for everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to join today to share these details about our budget request and the Commission's ongoing work. I look forward to your questions.