

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Member Jennifer McClellan

Hearing on “Evaluating FirstNet: Performance, Accountability, and Reauthorization”

February 4, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Hudson and Ranking Member Matsui, for holding this hearing.

This past week, most of the country was inundated by a snowstorm that caused nearly 2,000 flight cancellations, left hundreds of thousands without power, and resulted in more than 50 deaths, 3 of them Virginians.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their work and the continued investments FirstNet has made throughout the Commonwealth and the Fourth Congressional District.

Borne out of the tragic events of September 11, FirstNet is essential to ensuring our public safety community has the reliable, interoperable tools and resources necessary to respond to our most severe emergencies.

However, as FirstNet approaches the end of its current authorization, it is clear that the program is operating without sufficient, up-to-date oversight and accountability measures in place. Reauthorization is not simply about extending this program; it is about strengthening governance, reinforcing transparency, and ensuring that Congress retains appropriate visibility into how the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network is operating.

I am glad to work with my colleague from Florida, Mr. Dunn, on this legislation, and I look forward to continuing our bipartisan efforts to strengthen FirstNet so it can continue to serve first responders and the communities that depend on them.