

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services*, WC Docket No. 12-375.

With this rulemaking, we take a critical step toward addressing the high cost that prison inmates and their families pay for phone service. This is not just an issue of markets and rates—this is a broader issue of social justice.

In many cases, inmates are separated from their families by hundreds of miles, and families may lack the time and means to make regular visits. Phone calls are the only way these families can stay connected. But when a single call may cost as much as what you and I pay for unlimited phone service, the financial burden of staying in touch may be too much for inmates' families to bear. This harms the families and children of the incarcerated. But it goes beyond that. It harms all of us because we know that regular contact between prisoners and family members reduces recidivism. And in a country with the highest per capita incarceration rate in the world, where we spend nearly \$58 billion annually to manage its prison population—all of us should care about reducing recidivism.

Last year, the Commission took its first big step to address this problem. As a result, we reduced interstate long-distance inmate calling rates by nearly 40 percent. But we vowed to do more—and that is why we are here today. This new rulemaking seeks to address the exorbitant rates that prisoners and families of prisoners still face for in-state calls and slew of suspect fees for ancillary services and commission charges.

I am pleased to support today's rulemaking. I believe that when history is written, we will be able to say we did good and cleaned up questionable charges and usurious rates. Moreover, I believe that when history is written, it will show that there are two women who deserve credit for righting this wrong. The first is Martha Wright, who more than a decade ago, petitioned this agency because she thought it was unacceptable that she had to pay outlandish fees just to stay in touch with her grandson. The second is my colleague Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, who has been a tireless advocate for fixing this problem. Our arc for action may be far too long, but it will bend toward justice. These two women are chiefly responsible—and I am proud to support them.