

Remarks of Commissioner Mignon Clyburn (as prepared)
Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee Kickoff
Washington, DC
April 21, 2017

Thank you, Ms. Pierce, and good morning everyone. What a pleasure it is for me to witness today's launch. Each of you has been charged by the Chairman, with making progress on one of the core questions those of us who take our public interest obligations seriously, has been asking for years: how do we get robust, affordable broadband to all Americans?

Broadband is an essential communications service in the 21st century, and we must ensure that those who are stuck on the wrong side of the digital and opportunities divide today, do not remain so. You are key to ensuring that the voices of the American people are represented and my request to you today is a simple one: put #ConsumersFirst.

Whether you are discussing how to address the thorny issues of access to poles, ducts, or conduit, I ask that you think about the impact your decisions will have on consumers. And when you are debating franchising model codes, I ask you to think about the impact the contours of that code will have on consumers in the franchise area.

In particular, I ask that you keep the following three points in mind:

First, never overlook the effects of your policy recommendations on ensuring low-income communities are not relegated to a second-class broadband future. I am sure you have seen the maps and the studies, which show that sometimes the poorest among us get the worst broadband service. And while I am well-aware of the challenges that face providers looking to enable services in areas that are often least-able to pay, your mission is to look for solutions to this challenge. You must ensure that the policies you recommend will mend, rather than make worse, longstanding digital and opportunities divides.

Second, make sure that the broadband services you recommend for deployment, are affordable. I believe this will work best if we each look at the problem through a means-tested lens. Will low-income households and communities be able to take advantage of this next generation infrastructure? We should ask ourselves that. Will they be able to sign up for broadband and participate in the digital economy? If broadband is truly the great equalizer that many have held it out to be, how cruel is it to deny access to those who would most benefit from it? Build affordability of service into every equation you come up with, and I believe that you will find that consumers and broadband providers alike will reap the benefits.

Third, and finally, remember that one person's regulatory barrier, is another's vital consumer protection, and that one person's intransigent municipality, is another's carefully-considered protector of local interests. The infrastructure notices we adopted yesterday, framed many things that I would consider to be consumer protections as regulatory barriers. As you debate how to streamline processes of all sorts, remember that time is necessary for consumers to make informed decisions, about what to do when their provider says their legacy landline phone service is being turned off. As you determine how to draft a model municipal tower siting code, remember that all municipalities are not created equal. Cast a wide net for ideas and

understanding, so that we do not end up with a one-size-fits-all solution that ends up being one-size-fits-only-a-few.

I think I speak for all Commissioners when I say, that we have high hopes and expectations of this committee. But today, I close by simply thanking you for volunteering your time and efforts, to tackle these complex issues. I have no doubt that your time will be well-spent, and I look forward to engaging with you throughout the process.

Thank you.