

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Preliminary Report from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau on its Investigation into the Emergency Alert that Occurred in Hawaii on January 13, 2018*
(January 30, 2018)

As every one of us here knows, on January 13th residents of the Aloha State woke to ominous messages flashing on their mobile phones, streaming in from social media, booming from radio stations, and lighting up their television screens. These messages commanded all who saw and heard them to seek immediate shelter due to a ballistic missile threat. They included the haunting words: “This is not a drill.”

Years ago, I had the privilege of working for the people of the state of Hawaii when I served as counsel to the late Senator Daniel Inouye. So I know its residents are graceful and resilient. I am sure, too, that they are aware—like all of us—of new vulnerabilities in the Pacific. When this incident occurred, I reached out to folks in Hawaii who I worked with in the past to try and understand just what happened. They had only harrowing tales to tell. Imagine knowing you had only minutes left to live before everything you hold dear could be destroyed. What would you do? When this threat was over I am sure that people in Hawaii held their children a little bit closer. I know I did the same that night.

As Senator Brian Schatz said: “This system failed miserably. We need to improve it, and get it right.” Amen. So let’s get to work.

That work starts with the preliminary report that we produce today. This is thanks to the Chairman swiftly calling for an investigation. It was the right thing to do. It’s also thanks to the efforts of our talented Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. What their work reveals is that at many levels this mistake could have been avoided and its effects could have been mitigated. Now we need to take these facts and use them to improve our emergency alert systems across the board.

We can start by considering how this agency can help develop best practices at the local, state, and federal level. Then we need to incentivize their use through the Emergency Alert System state plans, which are subject to regular filing and review at the FCC. While we’re at it, we should address everything from state training to improved user interfaces that reduce the likelihood of error. In addition, we should explore the viability of offering alerts to audio and video streaming services and the possibility of aligning traditional daisy chain reporting practices with newer federal alert aggregation capabilities.

But above all, we need to act with dispatch. We need real changes in place on an accelerated schedule. We should commit right here, right now, to having them in place before the Summer begins—because what happened in Hawaii should never happen again.