STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL

Re: *Wireless Emergency Alerts*, PS Docket No. 15-91; *Amendments to Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System*, PS Docket No. 15-94.

Our emergency alert systems were first designed for war and then rebuilt for peace. In the wake of the September 11th attacks, we reimagined them again for the smartphone era. Today, Wireless Emergency Alerts are a powerful tool to quickly send messages to people in imminent danger. Ninety characters to the right person at the right time can mean the difference between life and death. These messages have already saved countless lives and helped avert many more tragedies.

This past year, however, exposed too many shortcomings in our emergency alert systems. We saw this quite clearly earlier this month with the harrowing false alert announcing a ballistic missile attack in Hawaii. On top of this, last year was one of the most devastating on record for natural disasters in the United States. California experienced its most destructive and largest wildfire season, burning 1.2 million acres of land and killing 46 people. Hurricane Harvey shattered rainfall records for a single tropical storm, flooding parts of Texas with more than 4 feet of rain. Puerto Rico is still recovering from when Hurricane Maria made landfall on the island four months ago. More than 1,000 people died in the storm and its aftermath. Thirty percent of the island remains without power. And Puerto Rico is still waiting for a report and plan for communications recovery from this agency.

In too many cases in the last year, Wireless Emergency Alerts failed to perform. In California and Texas, for instance, emergency services were unable to transmit these messages because they were unable to target them accurately enough to ensure that they would help those in danger and not cause panic among those beyond the area of concern. That's troubling. Moreover, it's a problem when the repeated imprecision of these alerts causes those who receive them to disregard warnings. We've seen this happen before with destructive weather in areas where tornado sirens have been sounded too many times over too large an area overstating the scope of danger.

That is why in November of last year I urged the FCC to act swiftly to require more granular geotargeting. For this reason, I fully support the actions the agency is taking today. The rules we adopt here can significantly increase the precision of Wireless Emergency Alerts. As a result, they reduce the danger of over-alerting, making their use more effective, more efficient, and more likely to save lives.

It's also important that we do not stop here. We need to watch technical issues impacting the targeted availability of Wireless Emergency Alerts–and be on guard for ways these issues can be resolved so that everyone gets the emergency warning they need. We need to consider multimedia use in alerts, "many-to-one" feedback capabilities, and multilingual messaging. The record on these issues is already robust. So let's do something bold—and take them on now before the next disaster or crisis compels us to do so.