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For Immediate Release**FCC TAKES ADDITIONAL STEPS TO COMBAT RURAL CALL COMPLETION PROBLEMS*****Action Implements Strong Oversight Authorized by RCC Act***

WASHINGTON, March 15, 2019—Using new authority granted by Congress, the Federal Communications Commission today took additional steps to combat the persistent problem of long-distance calls placed to rural America failing to reach their destination.

In 2019, all Americans should have confidence that they will receive calls placed to them. Yet, this is not always the case in rural parts of the country, where failed long-distance calls continue to provoke complaints by consumers. These call failures can have a significant impact on public safety, economic opportunity, and the quality of life in rural America.

While the FCC has taken a number of steps to improve rural call completion, the Improving Call Quality and Reliability Act of 2017 – known as the RCC Act – gave the FCC new authority over providers, called “intermediate providers,” that are central to call completion. A long-distance call may be handed off to multiple intermediate providers before reaching its final destination and oversight of intermediate providers is therefore critical to ensuring that calls to rural America are completed.

Under the RCC Act and rules set by the FCC last year, these providers must register with the FCC, and certain carriers that originate long-distance calls, called “covered providers,” may not hand off calls to an unregistered intermediate provider.

The Report and Order adopted today continues the FCC’s implementation of the RCC Act and sets clear, enforceable service quality standards for intermediate providers to help ensure that calls to *all* Americans are in fact completed. Specifically, intermediate providers will now be required to:

- Take steps reasonably calculated to ensure that all calls they handle are delivered to their destination
- When routing calls to rural areas, monitor the performance of any other intermediate providers with which they directly contract, and based on the results of that monitoring, take steps to address any performance problems with those providers
- Ensure that any intermediate providers to which they hand off calls are registered

Intermediate providers that fail to abide by these standards are subject to fines from the FCC. The FCC can also remove non-compliant providers from its registry, which would make those

providers ineligible for use by covered providers and other intermediate providers in completing calls.

Action by the Commission March 15, 2019 by Fourth Report and Order (FCC 19-23). Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly and Carr approving. Commissioners Rosenworcel and Starks approving in part and concurring in part. Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks issuing separate statements.

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