

REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR

AT THE WIRELESS FOUNDATION HONORS

“THE PATH UP WITH 5G”

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It's great to join so many public servants and leaders tonight to celebrate the power of connectivity. And it's an honor to receive the Mobile Life Award from the Wireless Foundation. I also commend Senator Gardner and Senator Hassan for their leadership on wireless issues, and congratulate them on their worthy recognition tonight. I am proud of the work we're doing at the FCC to help more Americans benefit from the opportunities that 5G and next-generation connectivity can enable.

As some of you know, I've spent much of the last year on the road. I'll be in Wyoming and Montana in a couple of weeks, which will be states 29 and 30 since I've been a Commissioner. There's no better way to learn how our policies can benefit everyday Americans than hearing directly from them.

One thing I've seen firsthand is how 5G is creating jobs in communities around the country. Now, the types of jobs I'm talking about might not be the first ones you picture when you hear “5G”—though there's nothing wrong with wearing zip-up sweatshirts while poring over laptops and sipping lattes. The 5G workers I've met tend to wear hardhats and toolbelts. They work with their hands. They scale towers and string fiber. And without their work, none of the other 5G jobs and opportunities would exist.

With new builds underway, industry could now fill 20,000 job openings for tower techs. These are good-paying jobs that could bring thousands of families into the middle class. They're skilled jobs, but they don't require an expensive four-year degree.

In South Carolina a few weeks ago, I met two young men who are studying to become tower climbers. Michael and Caleb told me that they didn't always follow the straight and narrow. They both dropped out of high school. They didn't know which way they wanted to go in life. But they found their way to Aiken Technical College and a shot at a career. When I climbed a practice tower with them, they were at the end of their 12-week program. That day, they both received job offers—as did every single one of their classmates. The path to the top of the tower and up in life was there for them.

As tower climbers, Michael and Caleb are now building a platform of opportunity for others. Access to fast Internet is the “backbone of the community,” as a young woman, Tommi, told me in Philadelphia's Sharswood neighborhood. For Tommi, the opportunity was to bring her family out of poverty. She's the mom to five kids, and many people have had an easier path in life. Tommi grew up in public housing. She dropped out of high school after giving birth to her first child. For the next 16 years, she made calls for a debt collection agency, which she described as a “dead end job.”

Tommi knew that she could do more with her life. She enrolled in Philadelphia's Orleans Technical College. It was “four years of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—often made for me by my kids,” she said. Tommi earned a perfect 4.0 GPA. She got a job at the Public Housing Authority, and, when I met her last year, she had just bought her first home. Now she's starting a masters program in mental health so that she can give back to her community.

None of this, Tommi told me, would have been possible without a mobile broadband connection. A mobile hotspot that she shared with her neighbors let her finish her homework. A mobile connection enabled her to apply for employment and for admission to school. It let her keep in touch with her kids when they stayed with relatives.

Mobile Internet transforms lives. With grit and determination, people like Michael and Caleb and Tommi are using the power of wireless to create a better future for themselves and their families.

That's why the work we do in Washington is so important to me. That's why our efforts to get more broadband infrastructure built in this country is a top priority. So I want to thank you again for the award tonight and thank you for the opportunities that wireless connections create for so many Americans.