STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL

Re: *Promoting Broadcast Internet Innovation through ATSC 3.0*, MB Docket No. 20-145.

These days my family is watching more television than ever before. I bet we are not the only ones. There's more time at home. So we sit together at night, basking in the glow of a single screen after first arguing about what it is we are going to watch. A good portion of that viewing is from the vast libraries of content that allow us to choose what we want to watch when we want to watch it. But linear programming still has a powerful draw. It's still the place where so many of us—my family included—go for not just entertainment but essential news about our community, our country, and our world.

Plus, traditional television is on the move. A new broadcast standard is on the horizon. ATSC 3.0 promises Ultra High Definition picture quality and immersive audio, advanced emergency alerts, and interactive services. This is good stuff. It could mean real innovation in broadcasting—on par with new services that have emerged on so many of the other screens around us.

But as this standard develops, we still need to address how consumers—folks watching at night just like my family—will navigate this transition. That's because ATSC 3.0 is not compatible with current television devices. To see its benefits, we will all need to replace our television sets or buy new equipment. That's an expensive problem we need to address because saddling consumers with big costs in this transition is not right.

At the same time, we should responsibly explore legal and technical issues that stand in the way of this standard's further development. That's what this declaratory ruling and rulemaking does today.

We clarify that long-standing television station ownership restrictions do not apply to the lease of spectrum to provide other services. This is important, because ATSC 3.0 has the potential to grow the things we can do with broadcast spectrum beyond over-the-air video. In fact, because ATSC 3.0 uses internet protocol to deliver its signals, and because it can push much larger volumes of data, it turns out that same bandwidth might be used to help deliver internet access too.

Of course, there are real challenges here. For starters, ATSC 3.0 lacks a return path. That means while it can push data to the public, it can't receive data back. That's a big obstacle for work, education, or telehealth online. Because as our movement to online life during the past several weeks has demonstrated, we are going to need more symmetrical connections to support next-generation services on our networks. In addition, any broadcast spectrum for new internet services will differ from market to market. That means it might be hard to cobble together airwaves to provide data services at competitive speeds with a nationwide footprint. Finally, without a market-based effort to put new chips in a range of devices, broadcasters might instead put these airwaves to use by just leasing it out to the same wireless carriers we are familiar with today.

To expand connectivity across the country, we need new ideas and new technologies. We're exploring everything from drones to hot air balloons to internet light bulbs. So let's add ATSC 3.0 to the mix. We need all the ideas we can muster and as a result, this decision and rulemaking has my support.