

**REMARKS OF
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR DIVERSITY AND DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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Good morning. It's great to be with the FCC's Advisory Committee for Diversity and Digital Empowerment—AKA the ACDDE, which is still a mouthful.

This is your first meeting of the new year, and, as you can see by my presence, that's not the only thing that's new around here.

We have a new operation with some new folks and some new thinking and some new priorities. Case in point, one of my first acts as Acting Chairwoman was to elevate D'wana Terry, who heads our Office of Workplace Diversity and Sanford Williams, who runs our Office of Communications Business Opportunities to posts as special advisors in my office.

I believe we should prioritize diversity and expanded opportunity not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's the smart thing to do.

You know what can hold back innovation back in this country? It's not a lack of talent. It's a lack of opportunity. Studies show it. They also show that when young children excel at math, what plays a major factor in whether or not they go on to become an inventor is their family's income bracket, their gender, and their race. My guess is that doesn't surprise a single person in this audience. But one finding from a team of academic and government researchers led by Professor Raj Chetty may grab your attention. According to their research, innovation in the United States would QUADRUPLE if women, minorities, and children from low-income households became inventors at the same rate as men from high-income families. You heard me right. Quadruple. They call this the "lost Einsteins" phenomenon. To put it another way, you don't have to be an Einstein to know that this inequality of opportunity is holding us back in a big way.

There's another key finding from this research that I found particularly relevant to this group. They looked at the women, and African Americans, and Hispanic Americans who defied the odds. What they found was that exposure to inventors and entrepreneurs had a huge impact.

In other words, if you can see it, you can be it. I believe it. I know how much it matters in my own professional life. I also know that for us all to see a little more clearly, we need to promote mentoring programs and internships and networking. We need everyone to bring someone else, who may not be just like us, to the table. And in the spirit of Shirley Chisholm, if they don't make a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.

Now these are the kind of things this Advisory Committee is all about. It's what you have been working on, and it's what I want to encourage you to keep at. And if this pandemic, politics, and all of it hasn't worn you out, then know you also have my support to step it up. I'll make sure you have whatever agency resources you need to do so.

This Committee is charged with providing recommendations to ensure that disadvantaged communities are not denied the wide range of opportunities made possible by next-generation networks. I know you have worked on adoption issues, including last year's workshop on the role of libraries in adoption and literacy.

But nothing has shined a light on the challenges brought by lack of broadband like this pandemic. It has revealed hard truths about the digital divide, the homework gap, and the consequences that come from being disconnected. Because those who cannot connect are denied—denied access to education, jobs, healthcare, and opportunity.

We need to fix that. The good news is that we have some initiatives underway that can help. This agency is looking at how to close the homework gap, seeking comment on how to update the E-Rate program so no student without high-speed service at home has to sit in front of a fast-food restaurant just to do nightly schoolwork or go to online class. Congress, too, has taken note of this crisis. It is working on new legislation to address the homework gap, and it has already provided this agency with new authority in the form of the Emergency Broadband Benefit. This new, \$3.2 billion-dollar program will provide substantial discounts to help low-income households get online. We are getting it up and running right now. But programs like these are most successful when we get the word out. So today—and you are hearing it here first—we are establishing a website where stakeholders can go to register their interest in helping to promote this new program. Sign up—at www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit. Because we all have a part to play in this effort, and I hope every one of you will join us as we seek to raise awareness about this opportunity to get more of us connected.

But for now, I am going to stop talking, so you can get to work. Before I sign off, there are a number of people that I want to thank.

First, thanks to ACDDE Chair Anna Gomez and Vice Chair Heather Gate for their leadership.

Thanks to your working group leaders, Caroline Beasley, Rudy Brioché, and Dr. Nicol Turner-Lee.

Thanks to the FCC's Media Bureau staff who've contributed to this event and the work of this Committee, in particular Michelle Carey, Sarah Whitesell, and Brendan Holland. Special thanks to Jamila Bess Johnson, Julie Saulnier and Jamile Kadre for their service as Designated Federal Officers for this Committee.

Thanks also to Jeff Riordan and the Commission's AV team for all they do behind the scenes so we can meet virtually.

Above all, thanks to all of you for volunteering to be a part of this effort. I understand how valuable your time and energy is, and I am grateful that you are spending it in support of this Committee.

Now let's get to work!