

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Partitioning, Disaggregation, and Leasing of Spectrum*, WT Docket No. 19-38, Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (July 14, 2022)

No matter who you are or where you live, you need access to modern communications to have a fair shot at 21st century success. That is why the Federal Communications Commission is pursuing a “100 percent” broadband policy. In other words, our efforts won’t stop until we bring affordable, reliable high-speed broadband to 100 percent of the United States.

To make this happen, we will need a mix of initiatives. That includes the tried and true, like the high-cost universal service system as well as newer efforts like the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and Affordable Connectivity Program. It also will require that we get creative—especially when it comes to infrastructure in rural areas.

The economics of deployment in rural areas can be tough. Networks are costly to build and maintain in places where the population is sparse. Private investment can lead the way but there are going to be places where it may not be enough. We need to fix this so that rural communities are not forever consigned to the wrong side of the digital divide and shut off from the economic opportunities of the internet age.

Today we adopt a creative policy to address this challenge. We establish a new program to help expand wireless service in rural areas and create more opportunities for smaller wireless carriers and Tribal nations. We call it the Enhanced Competition Incentive Program, or ECIP. Here’s how it will work. We know that right now some wireless providers have access to airwaves that others might be better positioned to deploy. But in the past our rules haven’t always made it easy to get spectrum resources to those who want to build in the places that need it most. This new program will help fix that by building better incentives. Specifically, an existing wireless provider that uses its license to create new opportunities for smaller carriers or Tribal nations—by partitioning, disaggregating, or leasing the spectrum—will see gain and not just loss for doing so. How is that? From now on, we will reward them with longer license terms, an extension on buildout obligations, and more flexible construction requirements. It’s a way to make sure spectrum in rural areas actually goes to those most likely to use it.

But that’s not all—because we think we can do even more with this creative approach and evolve it over time. So today we also seek comment on expanded eligibility for ECIP and how it can be used to help promote rural deployment applications like precision agriculture.

I’m excited to see the new deployments this program will foster. I’m also grateful for the creative spark to establish this initiative that was first provided by Senator Klobuchar and Senator Fischer in the MOBILE NOW Act. We’re making their incentive ideas from that legislation a reality today and I think it will help expand wireless deployment in rural and Tribal communities. It’s a terrific tool to use—among others—to make sure we reach 100 percent of us with high-speed service.

Thank you to the staff who worked on this effort, including Lloyd Coward, Elena DeJaco, Kari Hicks, Jon Markman, Charles Mathias, Susan Mort, Katherine Nevitt, Roger Noel, Paul Powell, Jess Quinley, Jeremy Reynolds, Larry Somers, Sean Spivey, Joel Taubenblatt, and Mary Claire York from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Pat Brogan, Jonathan Campbell, Judith Dempsey, Rachel Kazan, Cher Li, Kate Matraves, Giulia McHenry, Michelle Schaefer, Don Stockdale, and Emily Talaga from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Jeff Gee, Pam Kane, Jeremy Marcus, Salomon Satche, and Josh Zeldis from the Enforcement Bureau; Andrea Kearney, Doug Klein, Bill Richardson, Anjali Singh, and Jeff Steinberg from the Office of General Counsel; Barbara Esbin and Sayuri Rajapakse from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; and Joy Ragsdale and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.