

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization*, WC Docket No. 11-42; Affordable Connectivity Program, WC Docket No. 21-450; Supporting Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence, WC Docket No. 22-238, Notice of Inquiry (July 14, 2022).

Maybe you've heard of the "shadow pandemic." It's the term used to describe the increase in domestic violence that has taken place since Covid lockdowns began more than two years ago. That's because when we shut our doors to protect against infection, abusers and their victims were trapped inside. They had few, if any, safe connections to the outside world.

Those safe connections matter more now than ever. Already one in four men and one in three women will experience domestic violence during their lifetime. It is increasing not just with the pandemic, but may increase going forward, too. That's because women face a greater risk of intimate partner violence during their reproductive years, including when they are pregnant.

The ability to choose, the freedom to seek essential health care, and the right to be free of domestic violence are all at risk. These are not abstractions. These are our friends, our families, and our neighbors. These are people you know, who may have suffered during the pandemic, and who may struggle in the days ahead. We need to ensure every one of them has a way to connect to the assistance they need for healthcare, for housing and to be safe from those who would do them harm.

This inquiry is an effort to do just that. We seek to understand how the Federal Communications Commission can assist survivors by exploring modifications to the Lifeline Program and Affordable Connectivity Program. Both programs provide essential connections that offer a meaningful way to reach out for help, especially in environments where other communications may be monitored or controlled. For this reason, we explore how to provide temporary enrollment and how to protect call logs from showing efforts to reach domestic violence hotlines in order to ensure that survivors have the ability to seek the help they need safely and securely. This inquiry is consistent with proposals in the Safe Connections Act and I want to thank Senator Schatz, Senator Fischer, Representative Eshoo, and Representative Kuster for their leadership on this legislative effort.

I also want to thank the staff of the agency for their work here, including Pam Arluk, Jessica Campbell, Jodie Griffin, Trent Harkrader, Diane Holland, Ed Krachmer, John Lockwood, Aurelie Mathieu, and Nick Page from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Malena Barzilai, Rick Mallen, Linda Oliver, and Elliot Tarloff from the Office of General Counsel; Mark Azic, Joanna Fister, Eugene Kiselev, and Maciej Wachala from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Ed Bartholme, Richard Smith, and Kristi Thornton from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Garnet Hanly from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Tom Buckley, Mark Stephens, and Sanford Williams from the Office of Managing Director; and Pamela Gallant, Jeffrey Gee, Kalun Lee, and Keith Morgan from the Enforcement Bureau.