

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services*, WC Docket No. 12-375, Fourth Report and Order and Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (September 29, 2022)

Incarcerated people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or who have a speech disability are in a prison within a prison. All too often, they find basic communications services are not even available. In fact, the record before us describes how some incarcerated people who are deaf were not aware of the covid virus until more than a year into the pandemic. One deaf individual who was previously an inmate told us that he was always the last to hear about food, announcements, and basic information. Others told us about how deeply alone they were, unable to communicate with loved ones and legal representation outside of prison.

This is not right. And it ends right here, today. In this decision, the Federal Communications Commission requires that prison phone providers offer access to all relay services supported by the Telecommunications Relay Services Fund, as well as American Sign Language point-to-point video communications. In other words, thanks to our action, those with disabilities who are incarcerated will have a right to basic communications that has too often been disregarded and forgotten. We are committed to fixing it.

We are also committed to continuing the effort to ensure calling rates are fair for all. That is why today we take further action to reform our rules to lower the caps on ancillary service charges and put an end to abusive tactics like providers refusing to refund balances on inactive accounts. In addition, we seek further comment on how to use new data from prison phone providers to set permanent rates that are just and reasonable.

Every one of these steps is progress. Every one of them is a movement toward prison phone justice. We won't stop until the job is done.

For today's actions I want to start by thanking my former colleague Mignon Clyburn. She pressed this agency to act on prison phone rates, again and again and she did it when it would be easier to look the other way. So we will continue to make the progress she called for so rightfully and consistently. Thank you also goes to the terrific team at the agency who have worked to ensure that those who are incarcerated and their families can communicate, and that includes Bob Aldrich, Diane Burstein, Eliot Greenwald, Joshua Mendelsohn, Ike Ofobike, Alejandro Roark, Michael Scott, and Ross Slutsky from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Sharon Lee from the Enforcement Bureau; Susan Bahr, Ahuva Battams, Peter Bean, Elizabeth Cuttner, Amy Goodman, Trent Harkrader, Bill Kehoe, Lee McFarland, Terri Natoli, Erik Raven-Hansen, Zach Ross, Gunjan Shah, Simon Solemani, Hayley Steffen, Gil Strobel, and Jennifer Vickers from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Maura McGowan from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities; Sarah Citrin, Valerie Hill, Marcus Maher, Rick Mallen, and Bill Richardson from the Office of General Counsel; Conor Altman, Steven Kauffman, Eugene Kislev, Richard Kwiatkowski, Susan Lee, Kim Makuch, Eric Ralph, and Andrew Wise from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Andrew Mulitz and Soumitra Das from the Office of Managing Director.