

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Promoting Telehealth in Rural America*, Order on Reconsideration, Second Report and Order, Order, and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket No. 17-310 (January 26, 2023).

Bethel, Alaska sits along the banks of the slow-moving Kuskokwim River—about 40 meandering miles upstream from the Bering Sea and 400 air miles west of Anchorage. The town of about 6,000 people is completely cut off from the road system. You can get there by air, by sea, or in the winter, if you're brave enough, by ice road.

Last summer, both Commissioner Simington and I had the chance to spend time in Bethel on a visit led by Senator Sullivan. That's where we met with the health care providers at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Hospital. It's a 50-bed hospital that provides critical care to individuals in Bethel and other remote communities that are spread across a geographic area the size of Oregon. The hospital houses the only emergency room in the region and, for many, it is the only source of trauma care and surgical services. Much like other facilities in Alaska, the hospital's connections and telehealth services are supported by the FCC's Rural Health Care Program.

With respect to closing the digital divide in Alaska, I don't think the FCC has always gotten it right when it comes to our statutory obligations. We have been working hard to correct course, though. Today's decision is another good step in the right direction. I want to thank my colleagues for working with my office to improve today's item both for the providers in Alaska and for those across the country. There is more work to be done, and I am committed to working with all stakeholders to get this program right over the long term.

In closing, I want to recognize the staff and leadership of the Wireline Competition Bureau for their hard work on this item. You have my thanks, and the item has my support.