

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Supporting Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence*, WC Docket No. 22-238; *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization*, WC Docket No. 11-42; *Affordable Connectivity Program*, WC Docket No. 21-450, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (February 16, 2023).

It was Valentine's Day this week. For most of us, that means cue the flowers and chocolate. After all, it's our national holiday for celebrating relationships. Of course, relationships are complicated. Not every one of them is healthy. And yet every one of us deserves relationships free from domestic violence.

There are some extraordinary people in this country and this community who help those who have experienced domestic violence. I know, because I recently had the opportunity to sit down with leadership from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, The National Center for Victims of Crime, the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Mary's Center, and My Sister's Place. And on Valentine's Day I visited My Sister's Place, a domestic violence center right here in our Nation's capital.

What I learned is that domestic abuse often happens in silence. Abusers rely on shame and stigma. They will cut off their partners from resources and support systems. They will quietly and consistently make it difficult for them to break away and build a new life for themselves and their families.

But we are going to do our part to break that silence. That's because the Federal Communications Commission now has the authority under the Safe Connections Act to help provide survivors of domestic abuse with a line to reach out, keep connected, and stay safe. The law provides a pathway for survivors to swiftly and securely separate from communications contracts like family plans. It also sets up a way for survivors to receive emergency communications support from Lifeline or the Affordable Connectivity Program for up to six months. Just as important, we are making sure communications are private. To this end, the law sets a path for identifying and removing hotline numbers from call and text logs so that those seeking help can do so without fear of discovery by their abuser. Today, we ask questions about all of these aspects of the Safe Connections Act. Every one of them builds on a record we already developed at the agency in an inquiry last year to explore how to help survivors of domestic violence stay connected. We are working hard; we are going to make this happen.

Along the way, we are building relationships. Let me announce one of them right here and now. Today, the wireless industry will join with the National Domestic Violence Hotline to launch a Partnership to Support Survivors. The carriers involved—including the largest providers of wireless service—will set up systems so that when survivors call to leave a family plan and set up a new line that incoming call will be received by someone who will offer support and resources from those who work with survivors of domestic abuse. We are going to turn this call into a touchpoint that is meaningful and helpful. Thank you to the carriers who worked with us to make the Partnership to Support Survivors possible.

Another relationship I want to highlight is just how meaningful it has been to learn from Toshira Monroe from My Sister's Place about domestic violence survivors and how we can provide valuable support. She is a dynamo and I am so glad that she was able to join us for our vote here today and thank her for taking us on a tour of the facility on Valentine's Day.

Finally, I want to thank Senator Schatz, Senator Fischer, Representative Eshoo, Representative Wahlberg, and Representative Kuster for championing the Safe Connections Act. We are all here because you made passage of this law a priority. We are grateful for your work and we are going to do good things with this new responsibility.

Thank you also to those at the agency who worked on this effort, including Allison Baker, David Brodian, Jessica Campbell, Callie Coker, Adam Copeland, Jodie Griffin, Travis Hahn, Trent Harkrader,

Diane Holland, Melissa Droller Kinkel, Ed Krachmer, Chris Laughlin, Aurélie Mathieu, Jodie May, Nick Page, and Hayley Steffen from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Garnet Hanly, Georgios Leris, John Lockwood, and Jennifer Salhus from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Eduard Bartholme, Barbara Esbin, Aaron Garza, Derik Goatson, Sayuri Rajapakse, and Kimberly Wild from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Bambi Kraus from the Office of Native Affairs and Policy; Pamela Gallant, Kalun Lee, Georgina Feigen, Mindy Littell, and Pam Slipakoff from the Enforcement Bureau; Malena Barzilai, William Dever, Andrea Kelly, Eugene Kiselev, Richard Mallen, William Richardson, Jeffrey Steinberg, and Elliot Tarloff from the Office of General Counsel; Mark Azic, Maciej Wachala, and Joanna Fister from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Thomas Buckley, Mark Stephens, and Sanford Williams from the Office of Managing Director; and Cara Grayer, Michael Gussow, and Joy Ragsdale from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.