

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Connect America Fund, Alaska Connect Fund, Universal Service Reform—Mobility Fund, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 23-328, 14-58, 09-197, WT Docket No. 10-208, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Report and Order (October 19, 2023)*

We are on a mission to connect everyone, everywhere in this country to high-speed broadband. That includes Alaska. Like many of my colleagues, I have spent time awed by the vastness of the state, traveling off-road both above and below the Arctic Circle. I will spare you my stories, including the ones involving my deep-sea fishing exploits. What is important to remember is that the people of Alaska need connections to the digital age like everyone else. And it is just as important to recognize that the state's contours, rugged terrain, and cold climate present special challenges when it comes to deploying high-speed broadband service.

That is why at the Federal Communications Commission I believe we need policies to support Alaska that are as unique as the state itself. Seven years ago, this agency developed the Alaska Plan. This was a special effort to address the state's needs as part of our broader universal service system supporting communications in high-cost, rural, and remote areas. The plan provides the bulk of the agency's high-cost support for Alaska and is scheduled to end in 2026. So now is the right time to look back on the progress made and look ahead at what more can be done to support the last frontier state.

To do this effectively, we need to assess what we have accomplished to date through the universal service system. We also need to recognize the role of new funding, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and how it will support deployment going forward.

That is why today we are taking a fresh look at how we can update the universal service system to continue providing high-cost funding for Alaska. We ask how to ensure that the next phase of high-cost support—which we are calling the Alaska Connect Fund—works hand-in-glove with new funding efforts. We ask about new technology. And to help us get this right, we now have detailed maps indicating where service is, and is not, in the state. These maps are improving all the time and have already helped us identify gaps in coverage in areas where people need it most—where they live, work, and travel. They are also a tool that can help us avoid duplicative funding across programs. In addition, we ask how to best target support for both fixed broadband and mobile service in the state's unserved and underserved communities and seek comment on the budget, timing, and appropriate transition from existing support.

I look forward to the record we develop. But even more, I look forward to ensuring that we reach everyone, everywhere with high-speed broadband in the 49th state.

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Counsel; and Mike Gussow, Joycelyn James, and Joy Ragsdale from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.