

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Wireless Emergency Alerts*, PS Docket No. 15-91; *Amendments to Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System*, PS Docket No. 15-94, Third Report and Order (October 19, 2023)

On October 4th, I was at Gallaudet University. I spoke at an afternoon class taught by the school's president, Roberta Cordano. It was a session dedicated to understanding policy from the inside out. But as erudite as my remarks were, we had a powerful object lesson in policymaking right then and there when the national test of the Wireless Emergency Alert system went off mid-lecture. Students instinctively reached for their phones, not because this community heard their devices—we were at the Nation's premier school for the deaf, after all—but because these special alerts have a distinctive vibration. It was a reminder that when we build systems to support public safety, we make policy choices about who we reach and how it can help save lives.

Today we make another choice. We extend the reach of the Wireless Emergency Alert system to 13 languages, including American Sign Language. We do this by requiring participating wireless providers to support templates based on a system that New York State Attorney General Letitia James brought to our attention following floods caused by Hurricane Ida when not all residents, especially those speaking Asian languages, got the information they needed for their safety. She pressed us to recognize how expanding multilingual alerting can save lives. We agree and we are taking action. We are also requiring wireless providers to support location-aware maps so those who get these alerts have a better sense of precisely where the emergency is occurring. On top of this, we are establishing a new database at the Federal Communications Commission to help provide alert originators with more insight into where and to what extent these alerts are available in their communities.

Then with an eye to the future, we announce that we are seeking to partner with entities that have the ability to test the delivery of these alerts through technologies like new satellite systems. Why is this so important? Because our alert systems need to be resilient and in many disasters terrestrial wireless towers are rendered inoperable. We need alternative solutions, so we turn to space.

These are important changes to the Wireless Emergency Alert system. They are among the most vital reforms we can make under existing law to make sure these warnings reach people when they need them most. But I think the Warning Alert and Response Network Act, which created Wireless Emergency Alerts and was signed into law in 2008, is showing its age. The law was passed just as the smartphone era began. It assumes that the warnings we receive on wireless devices are an afterthought, secondary to those delivered over radio and television through the mandatory Emergency Alert System. As a result, participation in the Wireless Emergency Alerts remains voluntary. These are the devices we have in our palms, pockets, and purses at all times. Every carrier and every device should be capable of receiving these warnings. This should not be voluntary. It's time to update the law.

For now, though, I would like to thank the New York Attorney General who brought this issue to our attention, the students at Gallaudet University who in real time made me think about this issue in new ways, and the staff responsible for this effort including Nicole McGinnis, Austin Randazzo, Erika Olsen, Michael Antonino, Shabbir Hamid, James Wiley, David Sieradzki, Steven Carpenter, Ahmed Lajouji, Rasoul Safavian, Rochelle Cohen, and Debra Jordan from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Garnet Hanly from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Suzy Rosen Singleton and William David Wallace from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Jeremy Marcus from the Enforcement Bureau; Chana Wilkerson and Joy Ragsdale from the Office of Communications Business

Opportunities; Aleks Yankelevich from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Douglas Klein, William Huber, and Deborah Broderson from the Office of General Counsel.