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COMMISSIONER, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

“NOMINATIONS HEARING: FCC”

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Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today. I want to start by expressing my thanks to the President for nominating me to serve another term as a Commissioner on the Federal Communications Commission. I am honored to have this Committee consider that nomination.

At the outset, I want to thank you and your staffs for the courtesies you have shown me in our recent meetings and for giving me the opportunity to learn more about the technology and communications issues that are important to you, your states, and your constituents. Our discussions underscored the very meaningful role the FCC plays in the lives of all Americans—whether it is promoting broadband deployment, protecting consumers, or advancing public safety.

While serving on the Commission, I have welcomed the opportunity to get outside the Beltway. I have spent time in many of your states and met with parents, teachers, public safety officials, health care providers, farmers, and community leaders impacted by FCC policies as well as the telecom and tower crews that are the unsung heroes of our nation’s communications networks. I have heard firsthand about the connectivity challenges that many still face and the opportunities that broadband enables. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed to another term, I would welcome the chance to continue working with all of you on ways the FCC can advance the public interest.

With the Committee’s indulgence, I would like to take a moment to introduce my family, which has grown since I last sat before this body as a nominee—my wonderful wife, Machalagh, and our three terrific boys: Quinn, who is 9 years old; Emmet, who is 6 years old; and Lachlan, who is 3 years old. We are just blessed to be their parents.

I also want to extend my congratulations to Ms. Gomez on her nomination and to Commissioner Starks on his renomination. Ms. Gomez’s career demonstrates a longstanding commitment to public service—from her leadership in the State Department’s Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy to her previous service as staff counsel in the U.S. Senate and roles at the FCC, White House, and National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Commissioner Starks is also an exceptionally thoughtful and dedicated public servant, as evidenced by his earlier service at the DOJ and in the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau. I have welcomed the chance to work collaboratively with him for a number of years now on the Commission. I would also like to congratulate Ms. Fara Damelin on her nomination to serve as Inspector General of the FCC. As a Commissioner, I have been proactive in my

approach towards working with the FCC's Office of Inspector General. If confirmed, I would welcome the chance to work with her on promoting accountability across FCC programs.

While I have had the good fortune of working closely with many of the Members here today, I wanted to take an opportunity to reintroduce myself to the Committee.

Since 2017, I have had the privilege of serving as a Commissioner at the FCC. It has been the highest honor of my professional life. It has been a tremendously rewarding experience, too, to serve alongside my fellow Commissioners—including Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel and Commissioner Nathan Simington—and to work closely with the many talented lawyers, engineers, analysts, and other professionals that work at the FCC.

But my time at the FCC began well before 2017. Indeed, I have long admired the agency's work and believe deeply in its mission. I first joined the Commission as a staffer over a decade ago. I worked initially as a staff attorney in the Office of General Counsel's Administrative Law Division. My job was to provide advice to the policymakers in the agency's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, and International Bureau. Later, I had the chance to work on those same issues as an advisor to then Commissioner Pai. After that, I had the opportunity to return "home" to the Office of General Counsel and serve as the agency's General Counsel.

Even with all of those experiences, I still remember the first time I walked into the FCC building. It was over 20 years ago now, during law school, when I interned at the agency. During one of those internships, I worked for Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy. Ironically, as a Commissioner, I ended up with the same office suite as Commissioner Abernathy. So every morning I had the chance to walk past the intern desk where I sat many years ago.

After graduating from law school, I accepted a job at a law firm where I could gain broad experience working on various telecommunications issues. Later, I clerked for a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, which helped spark my interest in public service.

I have learned a lot over the past two decades working on communications law and policy. I have come to know and admire the FCC's terrific staff. They are passionate about delivering for the public interest, and they truly are the agency's best asset.

As Commissioner, I have had the privilege of seeing the transformative power of a high-speed connection firsthand. Take Tommi, for example, a mother of five who I met in Philadelphia's Sharswood neighborhood in 2018. Many people have had an easier path in life. Tommi grew up in public housing. She dropped out of high school after giving birth to her first child. For the next 16 years, she made calls for a debt collection agency, which she described as a "dead end job." Tommi knew that she could do more with her life. So she enrolled in Philadelphia's Orleans Technical College. It was "four years of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—often made for me by my kids," she said.

Tommi earned a perfect 4.0 GPA. She got a job at the Public Housing Authority and was able to buy a first home for herself and her children. When we met, she was just starting a

master's program in mental health so that she could give back to her community. She told me that none of this would have been possible without a broadband connection. "Broadband is the backbone of a community—for finding a job, for education," she said. Tommi talked about how she used a high-speed connection to do schoolwork, to apply for jobs, and to gain admission to her master's program.

Tommi is an inspiration. Getting the chance to meet her is something that has stuck with me. But in a lot of ways, Tommi's story is not a one off. I've heard similar stories about the power of connectivity on visits to small towns and communities across the country. But despite the long strides we've made, challenges remain. The job isn't finished.

So I want to focus here on three of the top issues facing the FCC going forward—ensuring affordable, high-speed Internet service for all Americans; maintaining U.S. leadership in wireless; and promoting secure communications networks. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work alongside my FCC colleagues, your offices, and all stakeholders on these challenges.

First, the FCC has an obligation and an historic opportunity to ensure that every American has access to an affordable, high-speed Internet connection. Over the past two and a half years, in particular, the FCC has implemented new support programs passed by Congress that have benefited millions of Americans. We have also worked on a bipartisan basis to bolster competition for high-speed services. And I have been pleased to lead a telehealth initiative that has extended the benefits of these services to low-income Americans and veterans. In fact, since 2018, I've had the privilege of visiting more than 50 different health care facilities across 25 states. Almost every provider I've visited—from Spokane to Houston—shared a similar message about the spike we are seeing in telehealth and how the FCC's initiatives are helping them meet this demand. But there is additional work to be done on the digital divide.

FCC action on permitting reform is one example. At the onset of the 5G era, it was clear that the FCC's infrastructure rules needed an update. Back then, we moved quickly to modernize the agency's approach, and we cut billions of dollars' worth of red tape. Those reforms delivered results too. They allowed our private sector to bring thousands of families across the digital divide, to keep Americans connected during the pandemic, and to outperform dire predictions that the United States would cede leadership in 5G to China. While we made good progress on infrastructure reforms, the job is far from finished. To end the digital divide, we need to make even more progress on permitting reform. Closing the digital divide also requires the FCC to remain vigilant in overseeing the programs we administer. FCC action to combat waste, fraud, and abuse is going to be vital to ensure that we deliver on the goals Congress has articulated. If confirmed, I intend to continue working on promoting sound accountability measures.

Second, the FCC has an important role to play in maintaining U.S. leadership in wireless. America led the world in 4G wireless technologies and this, in turn, created jobs and economic opportunities in communities across the country. The challenge is to ensure that we maintain that leadership as 5G and other advanced and competitive wireless networks (terrestrial and

satellite alike) continue to roll out. Doing so will prove vital to America's geopolitical leadership.

Maintaining and extending U.S. leadership in wireless will require the FCC to continue an all-of-the-above approach to spectrum. That means continuing to work with all stakeholders to deliver a mix of low-, mid-, and high-band spectrum into the market. And we need to ensure that providers can choose from a mix of licensed, unlicensed, and shared spectrum bands to meet demand—all while protecting the interests of incumbents. If confirmed, I would continue the work necessary to ensure U.S. leadership in wireless.

Third, the FCC must further strengthen the security of our communications networks. America's communications ecosystem is facing an unprecedented set of national security challenges—from insecure gear built by entities like Huawei and ZTE remaining in too many portions of our networks to carriers like China Mobile and China Telecom seeking to expand their offerings. The FCC has taken numerous strong steps over the past few years to meet this challenge—including its recent work to implement the bipartisan Secure Equipment Act—but more work remains.

That work includes completing the process of removing insecure network gear and remaining vigilant as bad actors continue to seek out loopholes in our rules. If confirmed, promoting the safety and security of America's communications networks would remain a top priority for me.

At bottom, we have a tremendous opportunity in the technology and communications space to enact policies that will close the digital divide, advance U.S. leadership, and secure our communications networks. If reconfirmed, I would look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on these important issues and many more.

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In closing, I want to thank you again Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, and Members of the Committee, for considering my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.