

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Amendment to Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System*, PS Docket No. 15-94, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Feb. 15, 2024)

Picture an emergency situation. A natural disaster, like a wildfire or a hurricane. A public threat, like an active shooter or a missing child. Or an urgent update regarding public services, like a water contamination threat. Now imagine if you didn't have any information about the situation. If you couldn't access reliable, official reports, and had to rely on word of mouth, or were totally in the dark. Panic, confusion, concern. That's the reality for too many Americans, who don't receive emergency alerts in their language.

We've tackled this issue for the Wireless Emergency Alert system. Last fall, we required participating commercial mobile service providers to make alerts available in the 13 most commonly spoken non-English languages, and in American Sign Language. Today's item naturally follows that important mandate. It begins the process of requiring the same for participants in our Emergency Alert System – radio and TV broadcasters and MVPDs.

This is vital work. As I said to the members of our Disability Advisory Committee a few weeks ago, by definition, in an emergency, time is of the essence. Alert recipients must be able to receive, understand, and act upon emergency alerts immediately. We cannot have large swaths of Americans – whether they are hearing-impaired, or non-English or non-Spanish speakers – getting left behind. I understand that this will be difficult. It may require substantial updates to participants' existing systems, but today we make a start.

I want to thank the Chairwoman for her commitment to accessible emergency alerts, and to the members of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau and other Commission staffers who worked on this important item. It has my full support.