

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion*, GN Docket No. 22-270, 2024 Section 706 Report (March 14, 2024)

I support the adoption of today's Section 706 Report, which updates the benchmark for broadband to 100/20 Mbps and finds that more work must be done to connect the unconnected. I couldn't agree more.

Today's Report finds that 24 million Americans lack access to fixed broadband connectivity. More must be done to ensure that broadband is being reasonably and timely deployed to all Americans, and particularly those that have been historically underserved—consumers who live in rural, tribal, and low-income communities. More must also be done to ensure that when broadband is deployed, that it is affordable to consumers. Ensuring that connectivity is affordable will ensure that once deployed, networks can be sustained.

Unfortunately, one of the FCC's greatest tools to closing the digital divide and supporting connectivity, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), will end next month. For low-income rural Americans, the ACP has been a lifeline to ensuring they have access to connectivity. For rural Americans who are yet to be served, the end of ACP means that the Broadband, Equity, Access Deployment (BEAD) Program's \$42.5 billion investment in broadband infrastructure may not reach them. These rural consumers have been waiting for connectivity to finally come to them—but may be disappointed when the buildout does not go as far as expected.

We've made so much progress. But as today's Report finds, more must be done. The ACP is a key tool that is necessary to continue our progress to connecting everyone everywhere, particularly, those in rural and hard to reach areas.

Thank you to the Chairwoman for her leadership on this item, and for her leadership in establishing the ACP. Thank you also to the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, and Office of Economics and Analytics for their work on this item.