

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program*, Report and Order, WC Docket No. 23-234 (June 6, 2024).

Last year, school districts as large as Los Angeles Unified in California and as small as St. Landry Parish in Louisiana were the target of cyberattacks. According to the Government Accountability Office, the loss of learning that follows these network disruptions can range from three days to three weeks. The recovery time for the school district can take as long as nine months. On top of that, the expense of addressing these attacks may mean millions for districts that never had this kind of a thing as a line item on their annual budget.

This situation is complex. But the vulnerabilities in the networks we have in our Nation's schools and libraries are real—and growing. So today we are doing something about it.

For decades, the Federal Communications Commission has helped schools and libraries secure access to communications services through the E-Rate program. This program is a powerhouse. It is the reason why schools and libraries across the country have access to high-speed broadband. We know now, though, that connecting these institutions can also introduce security challenges. We also know this is a multifaceted problem and there are many others at the local, state, and federal level, including the Department of Education and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, that need to be part of the solution. We do not have all the answers. But we can use our authority at the Commission to start asking the right questions.

That is why today we create a three-year Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program, with a budget of up to \$200 million from the Universal Service Fund. We will use this effort, modeled after our earlier and successful Connected Care Pilot Program, to study and better understand what equipment, services, and tools will help protect school and library broadband networks from cyberthreats. Over the course of the next three years, this initiative will make sure gains in enhanced cybersecurity do not come at the cost of undermining E-Rate's success in promoting digital equity and basic connectivity. Ultimately, we want to learn from this effort, identify how to get the balance right, and provide our local, state, and federal government partners with actionable data about the most effective and coordinated way to address this growing problem.

I want to thank the agency staff who worked on this important security initiative, including Allison Baker, Kristin Berkland, Callie Coker, Veronica Garcia-Ulloa, Jodie Griffin, Trent Harkrader, Bogyung Lim, Sue McNeil, Saswat Misra, Kiara Ortiz, Tiffany Purvis, Joseph Schlingbaum, and Johnnay Schrieber from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Larry Atlas, Jim Bird, Thomas Driscoll, Valerie Hill, Rick Mallen, Rachel May, Erika Olsen, Joel Rabinovitz, Royce Sherlock, and Elliot Tarloff from the Office of General Counsel; Behzad Ghaffari, Peter Gingeleskie, John Hannan, Liesl Himmelberger, Eugene Kiselev, Paulo Lopes, Jayson Palumbo, Eric Ralph, Steve Rosenberg, Michelle Schaefer, Craig Stroup, and Emily Talaga from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Nicole McGinnis, Drew Morin, Austin Randazzo, and James Wiley from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Warren Firschein and Mark Stephens from the Office of the Managing Director; and Joycelyn James from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.