STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL

Re: Facilitating Implementation of Next Generation 911 Services (NG911), PS Docket No. 21-479; Location-Based Routing for Wireless 911 Calls, PS Docket No. 18-64, Report and Order (July 18, 2024)

In Haleyville, Alabama you can see for yourself the bright red telephone with a rotary dial that was used for the first 911 call. I know because I saw it with my own eyes when I visited a few years ago. Billions of emergency calls later, that phone is a reminder that sometimes the biggest ideas come from the smallest places.

But big ideas—that result in services like 911—do not have staying power on their own. To thrive, they require continued attention and care. That is why over the years the Federal Communications Commission has updated its approach to 911. We expanded this system from wired calls to calls from wireless phones. Then we expanded it further to include calls from interconnected VoIP. Later, we added texting to the mix, creating another way to reach out in crisis.

More recently, we have updated 911 by ensuring when there are outages, public safety officials in our call centers are notified fast. We also adopted rules on location-based routing to ensure that every 911 wireless call goes to the right public safety answering point.

Today we continue this ongoing effort to update 911. We adopt rules to facilitate the transition from the analog phone and circuit-switched technology to next-generation 911. That means that going forward carriers must translate and route 911 calls in an IP-based format when a state or local 911 system can accept next-generation 911 calls. Our rules will create a consistent federal framework to assist with the transition to next-generation 911 nationwide.

We take these steps because what comes next with next-generation 911 is big. It will provide improved support for voice, text, data, and video communications. It will mean more redundancy to protect against outages. For those who call, it will mean the opportunity to provide real-time video of the emergency. It will mean the ability to provide first responders with instantaneous pictures. It will make it possible to transmit a patient’s medical records directly to 911 dispatchers. And for those who take calls in an emergency, all of this data can inform public safety efforts, improving emergency response and saving lives.

But our efforts here—bold as they are—require more. We need Congress to help support this next phase of our nationwide 911 system. The swiftest way to do it is to support the return of Commission authority to auction public airwaves and then direct the revenue raised to support public safety through next-generation 911 initiatives across the country. I have long advocated for this approach and still believe it is the way forward. After all, that red phone in Haleyville is a reminder that we have the power to be creative, connect this country, and make everyone safer.

Thank you to the staff responsible for this order, including Debra Jordan, David Furth, John Evanoff, Brenda Boykin, David Sieradzki, Chris Fedeli, Daniel Spurlock, Jay English, Jill Coogan, Rachel Wehr, Rasoul Safavian, Rochelle Cohen, Tim Hoseth, and Tom Eng from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Jeremy Marcus, Shannon Lipp, Elizabeth Mumaw, Ryan McDonald, and Regina Brown from the Enforcement Bureau; Chana Wilkerson and Joy Ragsdale from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities; Erika Olsen, Keith McCrickard, Anjali Singh, Douglas Klein, Marcus Maher, Valerie Hill, Chin Yoo, and Richard Mallen from the Office of General Counsel; Emily Talaga, Eugene Kiselev, Cher Li, Mohammad Ahmad, Alec MacDonell, Stephen Tolbert, and Aleks Yankelevich from the Office of Economics and Analytics; John Lockwood, Kimia Nikseresht, Grant
Lukas, Nellie Foosaner, Thomas Derenge, and Barbara Esbin from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Victoria Goldberg, Irina Asoskov, Terri Natoli, Edward Krachmer, Suzanne Yelen, Theodore Burmeister, Albert Lewis, Jodie May, and Simon Solemani from the Wireline Competition Bureau; and Suzy Rosen Singleton and William David Wallace from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau.