

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services*, WC Docket No. 12-375.

When I step back from the record in this proceeding, there is one number that simply haunts me—perhaps because I am a parent. Across the country, 2.7 million children have at least one parent in prison. That is 2.7 million children who do not know what it means to talk regularly with their mother or father. After all, families with an incarcerated parent are often separated by hundreds of miles. They may lack the time and means to make regular visits. So phone calls may be the only way to stay in touch. Yet when the price of single phone call can be as much as you and I spend for unlimited monthly plans, it is hard to keep connected. Reaching out can be an impossible strain on the household budget. This harms the families and children of the incarcerated. But it goes far beyond that. It harms all of us because we know that regular contact between prisoners and family members reduces recidivism.

Today, this changes. After a long time—too long—the Commission takes action to finally address the high cost that prison inmates and their families must pay for phone service. This is not just an issue of markets and rates; it is a broader issue of social justice.

We establish a framework that will immediately reduce interstate inmate calling service rates. Consistent with our statutory mandate to ensure that rates are just and reasonable, we require that going forward the rates at issue are cost-based. We also set standards for ancillary charges and per-call fees and put an end to billing-related call blocking. In addition, we lower the exorbitant cost of inmate calls for the deaf and hard of hearing. In the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, we seek comment on a range of other issues, including intrastate rate practices.

This effort has my unequivocal support.

So thank you to the Wireline Competition Bureau for your work on this proceeding. Thank you also to the many advocates for justice who pressured this agency to help relieve this burden borne by the families of those in prison.

On a personal level, thank you to Martha Wright for long ago bringing this issue to our attention. Thank you to Bethany Fraser for your powerful personal story and willingness to describe what this means for the children of the incarcerated. Finally, we would not be here if it was not for the leadership of acting Chairwoman Clyburn. She saw a great wrong and has put us on the path toward making it right. Her advocacy on this issue on behalf of prisoners and their kin has been relentless. As a result, more families will be able to stay connected—and more children will be able to keep in touch with an incarcerated parent. Thank you.