

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL O'RIELLY**

Re: *Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets, WT Docket No. 07-250; Improvements to Benchmarks and Related Requirements Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets, WT Docket No. 15-285*

Today's order updates the Commission's rules to ensure that more Americans with hearing impairments will be able to access innovative wireless handsets offering the latest voice communication technologies. Generally, expanding the scope to new wireless bands seems to make sense and is consistent with our obligations under the law. However, certain assumptions and conclusions, particularly about future technologies, give me some pause, but I am willing to let it proceed with the fair notice that these may need to be revisited as more information becomes available.

The accompanying notice, which I am willing to support, seeks comment on a consensus proposal that would increase the number of hearing aid compatible handsets over time, while permitting innovation and investment in new wireless technologies. The timeframes and procedures in the proposal are properly structured to enable wireless providers and manufacturers the needed flexibility to experiment with handset design, materials, antenna placement and batteries as they develop 5G networks and devices.

Nevertheless, I must ask whether further regulation and burdens are absolutely necessary here. For instance, the Commission is already looking at volume control issues in another proceeding, which may address some of the difficulties encountered by hearing-impaired consumers. Further, some assert that much of the discontent, to the extent it exists, may stem from a lack of information about hearing aids, making it difficult to select the best handset for a specific model.

On a side note, the fact that some wireless providers are unaware of which handsets are actually compliant with FCC rules has come up in my meetings as the wireless providers have faced unnecessary enforcement actions. The Commission has an obligation to improve this by presenting reliable and comprehensible information to consumers and providers, and I intend to fix this issue. To be clear, this effort can and will be done without further burdens or filing requirements on wireless providers or handset manufacturers.

I thank the Chairman and Commission staff for incorporating this edit and others into the item and look forward to engaging with all interested parties as we proceed to an order. Lastly, let me thank the tireless work of the industry participants and hearing loss community for their good work on the particulars of this item.