

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Improvements to Benchmarks and Related Requirements Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets*, WT Docket No. 15-285

Hearing loss is a big deal. More than 30 million Americans have some form of hearing difficulty—and among older Americans it is especially prevalent. In fact, for those between 65 and 74, one in three experience hearing loss. There is only one other group that wrestles with hearing loss in comparably large numbers—veterans.

Hearing problems are the most common service-connected difficulty experienced by our veterans. Military personnel who are repeatedly exposed to gunfire and explosives face special risk. Blast-induced injuries are not unusual. Stephen Carlson, who served two tours in Afghanistan, describes it like this: “I don’t remember the moment the bomb went off, but I do know that when I landed, stunned, at the bottom of the gun turret of my vehicle, blood was leaking from my ears. I was quickly evacuated to Bagram Air Force Base, where I saw an audiologist. I could barely hear a word he said, so he showed me a drawing of my eardrums. Only hanging shreds remained.”

Recovering from an injury like this is hard work. Getting accustomed to ringing in the ears, asking friends and family to repeat themselves, and acclimating to hearing aids takes time and effort. If anyone has the strength and fortitude to do so, it’s our veterans.

When they do, they deserve to be able to use mobile devices like everyone else. They deserve to have access to a full range of wireless handsets in the marketplace. They deserve to call, connect, and live life wirelessly like so many of us do.

Today’s decision helps make this possible. We put ourselves on a path to making 100 percent of mobile handsets hearing aid compatible. That means every device accessible to everyone with hearing problems. This is the right thing to do—for our veterans who have fought for our freedoms and everyone else coping with hearing loss. So kudos to the advocates, manufacturers, and carriers who have helped make this possible. This decision has my full support.