

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, as Amended by the Broadband Data Improvement Act, GN Docket No. 15-191.*

I am pleased that this year's Broadband Progress Report recognizes that both mobile and fixed broadband are needed to meet the ever growing demands of today's always-on consuming society. The two services complement each other so seamlessly that we often forget how much we rely on each. Indeed, I would challenge anyone fortunate enough to subscribe to both services, to forgo either for a week, and see how challenging it is to keep on top of the daily demands of work, school, home, health, commerce, to – well – just about everything.

There is a lot of good news contained in this report. It shows impressive strides towards meeting our goal of ensuring that all Americans have access to advanced telecommunications capability. I am proud to have been part of many of the landmark Commission decisions that helped to close these gaps, including the FCC's historic reforms of the universal service fund to focus on deploying broadband-capable networks in rural areas. What is also clear, however, is that there is more work left to do, and we cannot afford to declare victory until every corner of our nation has fixed and mobile broadband-capable networks.

There are two areas in particular where I believe additional Commission action is needed so that we are able to once and for all close some chronic technology divides.

First, the Commission needs to adopt a permanent mobility fund, as envisioned by the unanimous decision in the 2011 *USF/ICC Transformation Order*. The Report's finding that mobile is necessary for advanced telecommunications capability heightens the need to move swiftly on the mobility fund so we can close any remaining gaps in mobile broadband coverage. While I applaud the levels of private sector investment, there are places that still lack coverage, and other areas that only have service because of the ongoing support from the universal service fund. A permanent mobility fund should be expressly targeted to reach these areas. Existing legacy support for wireless providers is not necessarily the most efficient use of universal service. Indeed, the Commission estimated in 2014 that wireless providers continue to receive approximately \$590 million annually in legacy support but, currently, there is no obligation that this support be used to deploy broadband or to connect those unserved areas. This must change.

Second, we need to ensure that once deployed, the service is affordable. It is crystal clear that too many of our citizens, particularly those who are low-income, many with disabilities, and those living in rural and on Tribal lands, remain on the wrong side of the connectivity divide. In many of these places, ensuring that the service is affordable for consumers who are struggling remains a challenge. The Commission sought comment on modernizing the Lifeline program last year, and I am hopeful that we will move quickly to ensure that broadband is part of that matrix.

I want to thank the Chairman for his willingness to accommodate my office's edits, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to adopt a permanent mobility fund and finalize Lifeline reform with dispatch.