

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Promoting Telehealth in Rural America*, WC Docket No. 17-310.

Too many Americans living in our country's rural communities are at risk of falling behind when it comes to high-quality, affordable healthcare. It often is difficult to find specialists in many rural communities and even basic care can be out of reach, as we see rural hospitals closing by the dozen. The FCC's Rural Health Care Program can help make a difference.

I saw this a few weeks ago when I visited Lennox, South Dakota (pop. 2,111). I had the chance to tour a skilled nursing facility—supported by the FCC's Rural Health Care Program—and see how they are using broadband-enabled technology to improve patient outcomes and eliminate unnecessary costs. One way they do this is through their 'Johnny 5.' It's a connected workstation that allows patients at the Lennox facility to visit virtually with a doctor located in Sioux Falls or elsewhere. This broadband connection has eliminated the need for the long and sometimes arduous ambulance ride into bigger cities and gives patients access to specialists that they might otherwise be unable to see.

But the Rural Health Care Program is running into a funding shortfall, which is creating uncertainty for participating providers and patients alike. So I am glad to support this item, which would address the shortfall and provide longer-term certainty by adjusting the annual funding cap for inflation. This will make sure that health care providers can continue their important work of providing telehealth services to rural communities across the country.