

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

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

I have witnessed village clinics in rural Alaska use broadband to provide first-class care to patients in some of this country's most remote communities. I have watched as pediatric surgeons in California share their expertise via video with patients many miles away. I have seen rural clinics in Montana that use their connectivity to exchange electronic medical records on both sides of the continental divide. These experiences amaze because they can challenge our traditional notions of health care. They make clear that telemedicine can collapse distance and time and enhance the quality of care while also improving outcomes and lowering costs.

With this order, we take an appropriate step to provide additional funding to relieve health care providers of a shortfall that is harming their participation in the Rural Health Care universal service program. Our action is needed now because in its current formulation, the Rural Health Care program has been stretched to the breaking point. There's an honest reason for that. When this program got its start two decades ago, neither connectivity nor medicine looked much like they do today. Virtual reality, prescription vending machines controlled by doctors at a distance, and electronic health records were the stuff of science fiction. Now they are increasingly commonplace.

While injecting more funding into the program is the right call, we need to acknowledge our actions here are no more than a short-term band-aid. If we want this program to truly thrive, it is going to require more long-term care and attention than we provide today. I look forward to doing so because I believe strengthening the reach and power of telemedicine is a vital part of ensuring that the future of our rural communities can be bright.