

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Modernizing Suspension and Debarment Rules, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking,*
GN Docket No. 19-309

Ensuring the integrity of our programs is one of the Commission's most important roles. This is particularly true with respect to initiatives like Lifeline, the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program, E-Rate, High-Cost Support, Rural Health Care, and Telecommunications Relay Services. These programs are critical to many Americans and we must be a careful steward of their resources. We must also guard against those who would misuse those resources, diverting limited funds from those who need support the most. The rules proposed in this NPRM will help us to quickly suspend and debar actors who willfully or repeatedly misuse our funds, and they will give us greater flexibility and speed in managing our enforcement processes. The NPRM we adopt today will begin the process of modernizing and streamlining our enforcement efforts, and I thank the Office of the General Counsel, which has been working on these improvements for many years.