STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR

Re: Children’s Television Programming Rules, Modernization of Media Regulation Initiative,
MB Docket Nos. 18-202 and 17-105, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed
Rulemaking.

In 1990, Congress passed the Children’s Television Act, which requires the FCC to consider
whether broadcasters are serving “the educational and informational needs of children.” It also gives the
FCC flexibility to determine the specific rules or safe harbors a broadcaster can meet to satisfy this
requirement. And that flexibility is a good thing for two reasons.

For one, the market for children’s programming has expanded dramatically since 1990. Over-
the-air broadcasters now provide many more hours of children’s programming than the three hours per
week required by the FCC’s rules. For instance, Ion and PBS broadcast children’s programming for free
24 hours a day. In addition to broadcasters, cable channels like Baby First, Disney Junior, and Teen Nick,
which have never been subject to KidVid rules, also provide 24/7 children’s programming. Not to
mention over-the-top and online providers like YouTube, Amazon, and Hulu that offer a nearly limitless
lineup of on-demand children’s programming. And broadcasters are now competing directly with those
tech giants for the local ad dollars they need to stay on the air. So these significant marketplace changes
are one reason for the FCC to update its approach.

Another reason? The FCC’s nearly 20-year-old rules are now producing unintended results. The
record shows that our existing approach actually discourages broadcasters from airing and investing in
well-recognized children’s programming. For instance, Schoolhouse Rock and other short-form
programming don’t count as children’s television under the FCC’s rules, even though so many of today’s
children have expressed a preference for programming that is less than 30 minutes in length. And the
FCC’s requirement that programming be “regularly scheduled” has discouraged broadcasters from airing
one-off, family-friendly programming like after-school specials or local parades. Moreover, the FCC’s
inflexible approach to scheduling has prevented broadcasters from airing locally-focused programming
like debates, community meetings, and high-school sports. Our rules should not be discouraging
broadcasters from airing live and local programming that their audiences want to see.

So today, we provide broadcasters with the flexibility to meet the needs of their communities
while also ensuring that they live up to their obligations under the Children’s Television act. In fact, for
anyone that relies solely on over-the-air television, including low-income households that do not have
cable or Internet service today, stations will still be required to air an average of three hours per week of
children’s programming after today’s decision. In other words, 100 percent of households that receive
free children’s television programming over the air today, as a result of our rules, will still receive that
programming tomorrow.

In closing, I want to recognize and commend Commissioner O’Rielly for his leadership on this
issue and his efforts to find common ground with stakeholders in this proceeding. And I want to
recognize as well the hard-working staff of the FCC’s Media Bureau for their efforts on this item. It has
my support.