

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Rural Digital Opportunity Fund*, WC Docket No. 19-126; *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90.

Today's decision is more good news in our efforts to close the digital divide—to ensure that every American can access next-generation broadband, regardless of where they live. We are passionate about the opportunities that broadband can bring to rural America because we've all seen the difference a connection can make.

Last year, a provider connected Nye County, Nevada with fiber. It's a place that didn't even have phone service until the 1960s and where, before the fiber build, dial-up and painfully-slow DSL were the only ways to get online. I met a graphic designer who moved to one of the county's small towns to take care of her mom who had cancer. Without that fast fiber connection, she couldn't have continued to support herself and be close to her family in their time of need. At a kitchen table in Blue River Township, Indiana, I met another mom who realized her dream of reuniting her family on their farm with broadband. Her daughter had moved to a big city to work in advertising. But when the daughter became pregnant with her first child, she wanted to move her growing family back home. A fiber line plowed through corn fields made that possible: it allowed the daughter to work remotely and keep her ad job, while bringing the family back together in rural Indiana.

It's because of stories like these—stories of jobs, education, opportunity, and the chance to bring families together—that I am excited about the Commission's next great investment in rural Internet. The fund and auction we propose today would make available more than \$20 billion over the next decade. Those are significant resources, but we know they're needed to meet the challenge. Because while this Commission has made great progress in closing the digital divide—narrowing it by nearly 20 percent last year alone—the problem remains stubborn as we reach the most remote and underserved communities.

Today's proposal will go a long way towards reaching those hardest-to-serve communities. It does so by proposing 10-year support terms, which provide the certainty needed for these builds. It seeks comment on subscribership milestones, which can ensure efficient builds and the delivery of services that consumers will purchase. And it gives greater weight to offerings that can serve as the backbone for 5G services, which can help support a broad array of next-gen builds.

I would also like to thank my colleagues for agreeing to seek comment on a series of additional ideas. First, instead of treating every community with less than 25 Mbps fixed broadband the same, we now ask whether we should take a more granular approach. This might allow the FCC to prioritize communities that are truly unserved today over areas that already have 10 or 20 Mbps fixed broadband options. In addition, I am glad my colleagues agreed to ask whether mobile wireless offerings should be considered as part of that prioritization process, which could elevate the needs of communities that might have zero fixed or mobile service today. Second, we now ask whether there are more efficient ways to group census blocks in the auction—opening the proceeding to ideas that could achieve our goals without unnecessary federal outlays. Third, we now ask for feedback on how we might identify builds that are not succeeding earlier in the process, so we can ensure that ratepayer dollars are used wisely. Lastly, the document now provides even more clarity on how the mapping reforms we tee up in a separate item today can be used in these proposed auctions.

So thank you to the Chairman for laying out a long-term commitment to closing the digital divide, and thank you again to my colleagues for working with me on improvements to this item. And as always, I thank the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau and the Office of Economics and Analytics for their hard work. The item has my support.