

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Promoting Telehealth for Low-Income Consumers*, WC Docket No. 18-213; *COVID-19 Telehealth Program*, WC Docket No. 20-89.

Almost two years ago, former FCC Chairman Newt Minow and I advocated for telemedicine as “a critical tool for making Americans healthier,” and called for forward-thinking policies that could “bring[] our health care system more fully into the digital age.”¹ Now, in the midst of the national emergency caused by the coronavirus pandemic, our call has taken on serious urgency. Connected care can help us treat coronavirus patients, enable patients with other conditions to get care while maintaining social distancing, and protect health care professionals from greater exposure.

The FCC has an important role to play in achieving that result. Indeed, I’m hard-pressed these days to think of any better use case for the agency’s mission of advancing connectivity than telemedicine. And here, we take perhaps the most important step in fulfilling that role by establishing the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. This \$200 million program will enable health care providers to deliver cutting-edge care to patients outside the context of a bricks-and-mortar health care facility.

Thank you to President Trump for signing the CARES Act, which among other things provided the FCC with \$200 million in funding for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Thank you to the bipartisan coalition in Congress (particularly Senators John Kennedy, Chris Coons, and Roger Wicker, and Congressman Greg Walden) that included this funding in the law, as I had requested weeks ago.

Thank you to my FCC colleagues for voting to approve my plan with dispatch. Thank you to Commission Carr for leading on our telehealth efforts, including the Connected Care Pilot Program that we also approve today.

And thank you to the incredible staff of the FCC. We may be in the midst of the most substantial disruption to our day-to-day operations in recent memory, but our dedicated team has delivered—and at one of the most important times in modern history. For all they have done, I want to express my deep gratitude to Allison Baker, Regina Brown, Rashann Duvall, Darren Fernandez, Trent Harkrader, Kris Monteith, Ryan Palmer, Joseph Schlingbaum, and Hayley Steffen from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Deena Shetler and Cara Voth from the Office of the Managing Director; Malena Barzilai, Michael Carlson, Thomas Johnson, Andrea Kelly, Richard Mallen, and Linda Oliver from the Office of General Counsel; Octavian Carare, Stacey Jordan, Giulia McHenry, Eric Ralph, Steven Rosenberg, Emily Talaga, and Tracy Waldon from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Dr. David Ahern, Ben Bartolome, Michele Ellison, Dr. Chris Gibbons, and Karen Onyeije from the Connect2HealthFCC Task Force.

¹ Newton N. Minow and Ajit Pai, “In rural America, digital divide slows a vital path for telemedicine,” *The Boston Globe* (May 21, 2018), available at <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2018/05/20/rural-america-digital-divide-slows-vital-path-for-telemedicine/t8n4ncsfFcUASdf7XLH38J/story.html>.