

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Standards for Hearing Aid-Compatible Handsets, WT Docket No. 20-3; Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets, WT Docket No. 07-250 (terminated); Comment Sought on 2010 Review of Hearing Aid Compatibility Regulations, WT Docket No. 10-254 (terminated)*

One of the FCC's core missions is ensuring that all Americans have equal access to telecommunications networks and systems. While the services and equipment upon which we've focused our accessibility efforts may have changed over the years, the mobile handset has become critical to full participation in our society. As smartphones have become ubiquitous throughout this country, they connect people to their families, friends, and the wider world in ways unimaginable just a few years ago. To ensure that everyone has access to this convenience, the Commission has adopted the American National Standards Institute standards on hearing aid compatibility. Our rules guarantee that the millions of Americans with hearing loss can always find high-quality hearing-aid compatible handsets from manufacturers and service providers.

Today we propose to update our rules by adopting the 2019 ANSI Standard. Cellular technology is not static, and our regulations must evolve as technology improves. Consumers will find a simplified rating system on mobile phone packaging and clarifying labeling requirements, applied to a greater range of devices. This rule change also streamlines other regulations and makes it easier for device manufacturers to test new handsets. The standard will benefit all hearing aid users, providing equal access to an important piece of modern technology. This is particularly important as our population ages and hearing-aids join the age of the "smart" device.

The Commission will work with standard-setting bodies, consumer advocates, and the industries involved to continue to develop new standards, but I am confident that today's proposed rule is the right next step to keep our commitment to ensuring that all Americans share in the benefits of advanced wireless service.

Thank you to the staff of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau for their work on this item.