

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Promoting Telehealth for Low-Income Consumers*, WC Docket No. 18-213.

For years, the FCC has supported the buildout of high-speed Internet connections to brick and mortar health care facilities. That is important work, and the FCC will continue its efforts on this front because it ensures that patients inside a connected facility can access the highest quality of care.

Just over two years ago, though, we identified a new trend in health care. The delivery of high-quality care is no longer limited to the confines of a hospital or clinic. With smartphones and other connected devices, Americans can now access health care services right from their homes or anywhere they have an Internet connection. It's the health care equivalent of shifting from Blockbuster to Netflix. And this trend towards connected care picks up exactly where the FCC's existing support programs have left off because it enables patients to continue to receive high-quality care even when they walk out the doors of a health care facility.

The limited trials to date show that connected care technologies can drive down health care costs while dramatically improving patient outcomes. I've had the chance to see some of the results firsthand.

When I was in Laurel Fork, Virginia, in the heart of Appalachia, I met a woman named Cathleen who told me that she struggled for years with uncontrolled diabetes. She had been diagnosed five years before, and receiving treatment meant a two-hour round-trip drive to see a doctor. Finding transportation and getting to the clinic wasn't easy, so, like many others dealing with chronic conditions, Cathleen stopped going in for treatment for a few years. When she went back to the doctor, her A1C levels—the blood glucose levels used to indicate diabetes—had skyrocketed to 15.5. Levels that high are considered critical and are commonly followed by strokes and heart attacks. So, her doctor signed her up for a remote patient monitoring program. Through those connected devices, a team of experts at the University of Virginia monitored Cathleen's vitals remotely and offered daily care at a distance. No more long hours on the road to get care. No more reasons to forego the care she needed. So after six months, her A1C dropped to 7.5, and she has enough energy to run and play with her three grandkids.

Connected care does far more than replicate the care that patients receive inside a health care facility. The constant monitoring helps patients to stay healthy. I first learned about this on a visit to the Mississippi Delta. In Ruleville, I met Miss Annie, a patient at the North Sunflower Medical Center. One day, Miss Annie suddenly woke up with blurred vision, and after seeing her doctor found out she had advanced diabetes. She tried treating it through traditional methods of care, but didn't see much progress. She then signed up for a ground-breaking telehealth program being run in conjunction with the University of Mississippi Medical Center. She was sent home with a tablet and a wireless blood glucose monitor. Every morning her tablet chimes as a reminder, Miss Annie pricks her finger, and her tablet then displays her glucose number, which is then reported back via a wireless connection to her doctors. Based on that reading, an app on the tablet suggests appropriate actions—from a particular food or exercise, to watching a relevant video. If she forgets, she gets a call from a nurse. With this technology, her A1C levels have gone down, and Miss Annie says she's never felt better.

Connected care is not just for treating chronic conditions. At the UVA Children's Hospital, Dr. Karen Rheuban told me about their pediatric cardiology program, which brings high-tech care to the home. With a connected tablet, daily weight, heart rate, and oxygen levels can be tracked remotely, which decreases the need for high-risk pediatric patients to undergo ICU stays and invasive procedures. From diabetes, to heart disease, pulmonary disorders, mental health, high-risk pregnancy, and even pandemic response, connected care opens new opportunities for patients to get better results with less expense and hassle.

I am grateful that Chairman Pai asked me to lead this FCC initiative and for his strong commitment to this work. The FCC staff have worked tirelessly on both the Connected Care Pilot Program, and the COVID-19 Emergency Telehealth Program that built off of the record we established

here. I am delighted that today we are releasing the first batch of awards to a diverse set of health care providers. Notably, we are focusing this \$100 million pilot on low-income Americans and veterans. This is important because as next-generation care rolls out across the country, this Pilot can play a role in helping to ensure every American has a fair shot at these potentially life-changing and life-saving technologies.

So I want to extend my gratitude to the entire FCC team that worked so hard to get us to this point, not just in the past few days and weeks, but also over the past two and a half years that allowed us to reach this decision today.

Thank you to Matt Baker, Malena Barzilai, Bryan Boyle, Rashann Duvall, Abdel Eqab, Joanna Fister, Veronica Garcia-Ulloa, Trent Harkrader, Clint Highfill, Tanner Hinkel, Jesse Jachman, Rick Mallen, India McGee, Kris Monteith, Linda Oliver, Kiara Ortiz, Nick Page, Ryan Palmer, Negheen Sanjar, Joe Schlingbaum, and Hayley Steffen.

I look forward to meeting with these health care providers, seeing how these programs are helping to drive down the cost of care and improve outcomes for the Americans we serve, and working with my FCC colleagues on the next set of awardees.