

**STATEMENT OF  
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Emergency Broadband Benefit Program*, WC Docket No. 20-445.

Today the Federal Communications Commission makes history. It adopts rules for the nation's largest-ever program to help households nationwide afford broadband service. This is a big deal.

We do this now because late last year Congress charged this agency with building a new Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. This \$3.2 billion program was designed to offset the cost of high-speed internet service for those struggling to get the connectivity they need during the ongoing pandemic.

It's a challenge that is all too real for too many families. The Pew Research Center reports that one-third of broadband users fear not being able to afford service during this time. They worry because a cruel virus has upended so much in our economy and so much in our day-to-day life. Work, education, healthcare, and more have all migrated online. As a result, it's more apparent than ever before that broadband is no longer nice-to-have, it's need-to-have, for everyone, everywhere.

This is a program that will help those at risk of digital disconnection. It will help those sitting in cars in parking lots just to catch a Wi-Fi signal to go online for work. It will help those lingering outside the library with a laptop just to get a wireless signal for remote learning. It will help those who worry about choosing between paying a broadband bill and paying rent or buying groceries. This is good stuff. It can make a meaningful difference in the lives of people across the country.

Now for the details. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program will provide eligible households with discounts of up to \$50 a month for broadband service, and up to \$75 a month if the household is on Tribal lands. It also will provide a one-time discount of up to \$100 on a computer or tablet for eligible households, as was directed under the law.

Congress provided several ways for households to qualify for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program—all equally under the law. Pursuant to the statute, households that participate in an existing low-income or pandemic relief program offered by a broadband provider are eligible, as are Lifeline subscribers, including those that are on Medicaid or accept SNAP benefits. Households with kids receiving free and reduced-price lunch or school breakfast are also eligible, as are those with Pell grant recipients. In addition, so are households members who have lost jobs and seen their income reduced in the last year.

Of course, adopting these rules today is just the first step. So what happens next?

First, for this program to be a success, we need the assistance of local organizations, national organizations, schools, faith-based institutions, and others who are trusted voices in their communities, to help get the word out and encourage those in need to enroll. To make it easy for those who are interested in helping, we have a website dedicated to this program that includes a place for outreach partners to learn how they can get the word out. Check it out at <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>.

Second, we need to encourage broadband providers of every stripe to help by participating in the program and offering service to eligible households. To get these providers ready to go, Congress tasked the agency with reviewing and accepting applications from those who want to be a part of this program. That is just what we will do in the coming weeks—work with them and help them to get ready.

Third, we must build an IT system for this program that is easy to use and ready to go. We have to get this right because this system will need to enroll millions of households who will benefit from the program. But we also need to be respectful of the data we receive and protect the privacy of the information entrusted to us by these households and by other agencies on whom we need to rely. Our work on this is already underway, but across the board we need to do this the right way.

Finally, let me thank those at the FCC. My colleagues reviewed this program and provided their input on an especially fast schedule. We have incorporated their ideas when the law permitted, and recognize they had some ideas that may yet inform other programs and legislative initiatives down the road. In particular, I want to thank Commissioner Carr for his careful review and attention to detail to help make the program a success. I want to thank Commissioner Starks for his thoughtful focus on the beneficiaries who are at the heart of this effort, and especially his ideas to ensure that those households served by the free and reduced-price lunch program can easily and quickly participate in this program. I want to thank Commissioner Simington for his recognition of the importance of this program and his commitment to get this decision across the finish line. Likewise, I am grateful that the expert staff of the agency was able to pull together the rules for this program under such tight statutory deadlines. I am especially grateful for their continuing commitment to this initiative. I know that they will work hard to finish the tasks required to get this program up and running with providers and then ensure it is available to all those in need.