

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR
APPROVING IN PART AND CONCURRING IN PART**

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

Last year, this country was seized by a pandemic that seriously altered the lives of millions of Americans. In an instant, everyday tasks that used to be carried out in person moved online—from school, to work, to accessing health care. At the same moment, job losses mounted as waves of financial stress hit families across the country as so much of our nation’s economic activity slowed down or ground to a halt.

The FCC recognized the sudden shifts that the pandemic caused and immediately went to work to ensure that Americans stayed connected during the crisis. The Commission cleared the way for providers to donate computers and tablets so kids could learn from home, waived Lifeline rules so that under-resourced families wouldn’t lose wireless service, and worked closely with providers that launched new programs to connect low-income families with high-speed services. These actions made a very real difference, but they could not be sustained without additional support from Congress given the enormous capital it takes to build, maintain, and extend those vital connections.

At the end of last year, Congress came together and addressed this on a bipartisan basis by passing an unprecedented, \$3.2 billion Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund. Under this law, Congress directed the FCC to use these appropriated dollars to establish an Emergency Broadband Benefit Program to help connect families that could otherwise not afford broadband, including families with school-aged children.

Due to the emergency need for this funding, Congress directed the FCC to stand up this program in record time, requiring that we promulgate regulations in less than 60 days. Getting a program of this size and complexity up and running in such a short time was never going to be an easy task. And since last December, FCC staff have worked through holidays and weekends to meet our statutory deadline and deliver for Americans that are in need. I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to them. I also want to commend Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel and her staff who picked up the baton on this initiative after the starting gun had already gone off. Not the easiest of tasks to inherit.

For my part, I am pleased that our decision includes a number of my top priorities. For instance, we are moving forward with a unified start date for all eligible providers. This decision will help maximize consumer choice, encourage more robust participation in the program, and avoid the consumer confusion that could have resulted from staggered start dates.

I also want to thank my colleagues for agreeing to make some significant changes to the draft that circulated earlier this week. For one, rather than containing no guidance on when the FCC will stand up this emergency program, our decision now includes a timeline for beginning enrollment, specifying that we expect to open that process no later than 60 days from now. For another, we have now increased flexibility and reduced the burdens on providers that choose to participate in the program, thus creating stronger incentives for robust participation. We have also eliminated some disincentives by clarifying the rules that will govern the sunset of this initiative. We made progress on strengthening protections against waste, fraud, and abuse. And my colleagues agreed to additional changes, including bolstering the role that the Office of Economics and Analytics will play, improving the reliability of our forecast for how long the appropriated funding will last, and adding new guardrails on administrative expenses.

At the same time, I differ from my colleagues on a few of the issues we address today. But it is imperative that we come together, compromise, and find common ground so that we can stand up this program. For instance, while I would have preferred that we prioritize the needs of students, I remain pleased that the program we stand up today will benefit school kids. Indeed, we include several paths to participation for families with school-aged children, thus ensuring that we have stood up a program that will put dollars directly towards the monthly Internet bills of families with children. I also would have preferred that we make more of the necessary decisions up front through this document, rather than

delegating those choices to the Wireline Competition Bureau or to USAC. I think that doing so could have provided the public and providers with greater certainty about the path forward. And there remains significant work to ensure that this program will succeed.

I want to express my thanks once again to the FCC staff that have done yeoman's work to reach this point. And it's a long list.

From the Wireline Competition Bureau: Jodie Griffin, Christian Hoefly, Eric Wu, Celia Lewis, Micah Caldwell, John Lockwood, Jessica Campbell, Annick Banoun, Sherry Ross, Ryan Palmer, Allison Baker, Kris Monteith, and Jesse Jachman. From the Office of the Managing Director: Dan Daley, Tom Buckley, Jae Seong, and Mark Stephens. From the Office of the General Counsel: Malena Barzilai, Linda Oliver, Richard Mallen, William Richardson, Chin Yoo, Margaret Drake, Andrea Kelly, Jeffrey Steinberg, Bahareh Moradi, Paula Silberthau, and Elliot Tarloff. From the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau: Eduard Bartholme, Zac Champ, Lyle Ishida, Keyla Hernandez-Ulloa, Matthew Duchesne, Sayuri Rajapakse, Barbara Esbin, Kimberly Wild, and Patrick Webre. And, finally, from the Enforcement Bureau: Kalun Lee, Keith Morgan, Pamela Gallant, Jeffrey Gee, Mindy Littell, Georgina Feigen, Rizwan Chowdhry, Victoria Randazzo, and Pam Slipakoff.

I welcomed the chance to work with my colleagues and staff to improve our decision today. I will be voting to approve in part and concur in part.