

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Establishing the Emergency Connectivity Fund to Close the Homework Gap*,
WC Docket No. 21-93

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has made access to the Internet more important than ever before, including for millions of America's students. Last year, several organizations estimated that it would require approximately \$6.8 billion in support to ensure that every school kid in this country has access to a high-speed Internet connection. That is why my priority in this proceeding has been to ensure that the \$7.2 billion initiative we stand up today focuses on bringing all of those still unconnected students across the digital divide.

I want to extend my thanks and appreciation to Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel and my other colleagues for agreeing to a series of significant changes to the decision we reach today—all of which prioritize the needs of America's unconnected students. As originally drafted, there was a risk that the FCC's decision would not have connected a single unconnected student, focusing instead on reimbursing schools for the work they did over the past year to bring students across the digital divide. The final order we adopt today now gives us a fair shot at ensuring that 100 percent of the \$7.2 billion goes towards connecting those students that remain offline. Indeed, our first application window will now be exclusively focused on providing equipment and services on a forward-looking basis to unconnected students. We also leave open the possibility of a second window for prospective funding before looking to reimburse school systems for their past expenses. This approach ensures that school kids who are unconnected today are the ones who benefit from this program, as intended by Congress.

I appreciate that my colleagues also agreed to a series of additional changes. We now provide rural students with a fairer shot at receiving an equitable distribution of these funds. We now recognize that homeschooled children are eligible for support through this program, as well as qualifying students that attend private school. We now ensure that any funding for school staff, rather than students, is limited to those staff that will be providing educational services to students. We now take steps to allow broadcast Internet services, including ATSC 3.0 offerings, to play a role in connecting unconnected students. We now have a series of additional checks against waste, fraud, and abuse. And we now take additional steps to ensure that these limited funds are not spent overbuilding existing networks.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel for releasing a public draft of the item, which allowed for public feedback. This was not an action required by law, but her decision to do so brought an important level of transparency and public participation to this process. Our final decision has been greatly improved as a result. I also want to recognize the FCC staff who have worked quickly—through long nights and weekends—in preparing the order we adopt today.

From the Wireline Competition Bureau: Kris Monteith, Lisa Hone, Sue McNeil, Ryan Palmer, Jesse Jachman, Justin Faulb, Johnnay Schrieber, Kate Dumouchel, Gabriela Gross, Molly O'Connor, David Zesiger, Zachary DiLeo, Joseph Schlingbaum, Ken Carlberg, Cheryl Callahan, Adrian Wright, Clint Highfill, Carol Pomponio, Greg Vadas, and Gavin Logan. From the Office of the General Counsel: Michele Ellison, Linda Oliver, William Richardson, Chin Yoo, Richard Mallen, Malena Barzilai, Elliot Tarloff, Elizabeth Lyle, Jeffrey Steinberg, Paula Silberthau, Andrea Kearney, Margaret Drake, and Bahareh Moradi. From the Office of Economics and Analytics: Giulia McHenry, Eric Ralph, Emily Talaga, Eugene Kiselev, Steve Rosenberg, Aleks Yakelovich, Don Stockdale, Shane Taylor, and Ken Lynch. From the Office of the Managing Director: Mark Stephens, Cara Voth, Regina Brown, Jae Song, Jasson Soemo, Virginia Tucker, James Lyons, Pat Wolan, Hua Lu, Sheela Kailasanath, Tim Dates, Timothy Siekierka, and Sandeep Khana. And, finally, from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau: Patrick Webre, Barbara Esbin, Diane Burstein, Suzy Rosen Singleton, Elliot Greenwald, Robert Aldrich, Daryl Cooper, Michael Scott, Matthew Duchesne, Sayuri Rajapkse, and Derik Goatson.