

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services*, WC Docket No. 12-375, Third Report and Order, Order on Reconsideration, and Fifth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (May 20, 2021).

I recently heard from several families who had experienced firsthand the difficulties of maintaining contact with their incarcerated loved ones. I also heard from formerly incarcerated individuals who underscored the decline in mental and emotional health that can result from a lack of external communications. Beyond that, studies have repeatedly shown that increased communication between incarcerated people and their families, friends, and other outside resources helps reduce recidivism rates. And the COVID-19 pandemic has put even greater emphasis on these inmate calling services, as in-person visits have been severely limited. The FCC has a critical role in promoting just and reasonable rates for inmate calling services. So I am pleased that we are acting on our 2020 proposal to make these calling services more affordable.

I am also pleased that we are seeking comment on the availability of functionally equivalent communications services for incarcerated people with hearing or speech loss. It is critically important these individuals have equal and affordable access to communication services that will allow them to interact with family, friends, and other important resources, such as attorneys and medical professionals. As we move forward in this proceeding, I am also interested in additional comment on the role that site commissions play in the rates for inmate calling services and whether the Commission can and should do more to address those charges, which can add to the cost of providing services inside correctional facilities.

I want to recognize the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau who have worked hard on these important issues. You have my thanks, and the item has my support.