

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Resilient Networks*, PS Docket No. 21-346; *Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80; *New Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, ET Docket No. 04-35 (June 27, 2022)

Today's action will help Americans access wireless service in the wake of natural disasters and other emergencies—and it has my full support.

The Report and Order makes participation in the Wireless Resiliency Framework mandatory for all facilities-based providers, strengthening accountability and bringing more networks into the resiliency fold. It improves emergency roaming in much the same way—and by requiring carriers to negotiate and test their arrangements *before* disaster strikes. It also makes the Framework easier to activate, paving the way for better service during more emergencies, including wildfires and blackouts. The after-action reports we require today are also critically important. They'll help us develop the facts we need to monitor and learn from the Framework's implementation, and to improve our situational awareness during disasters.

The rules we adopt today are also a critical part of our efforts to respond to the climate crisis. We continue to experience more frequent and more frequently severe disruptions to our connectivity. Robust, resilient networks that can withstand or quickly respond to severe weather events are essential.

We also cannot ignore how these disasters disproportionately impact the low-income.¹ As Hurricane Ida demonstrated, natural disasters can devastate low-income communities whether they are coastal or inland.² We also know that the devastation can persist long after emergency personnel have accomplished their missions³ and that low-income communities often struggle to secure the funding they need to mitigate damage from future disasters.⁴ Other agencies are also working hard to mitigate these inequities, and I sincerely believe the FCC's work on resiliency is an important advancement. As I've said before, we will not have equal access to communications if we do not have resilient communications networks—and today's action takes an important step towards bridging the gap.

¹ Press Release, United States Environmental Protection Agency, EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States (Sept. 2, 2021), <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-report-shows-disproportionate-impacts-climate-change-socially-vulnerable> (EPA Report); Anthony Leiserowitz & Karen Akerlof, *Yale Project on Climate Change, Race, Ethnicity and Public Responses to Climate Change* (2010), https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2010_04_Race-Ethnicity-and-Public-Responses-to-Climate-Change.pdf.

² Adam Piore, *Cities Brace for Apocalyptic Flooding As New Age of Super Storms Dawns*, Newsweek Magazine (May 11, 2022), <https://www.newsweek.com/2022/05/27/cities-brace-apocalyptic-flooding-new-age-super-storms-dawns-1705402.html>.

³ See, e.g., Robert Benincasa & Rebecca Hersher, *How Federal Disaster Money Favors the Rich* (Mar. 5, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/05/688786177/how-federal-disaster-money-favors-the-rich>; Kriston Capps, *Texas Renters are Still Waiting for Recovery Relief from Hurricane Harvey*, Bloomberg.com (Aug. 31, 2020), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-08-31/hurricane-relief-still-has-a-racial-equity-problem>.

⁴ See Tracy Jan, *Black Communities Are Last in Line for Disaster Planning in Texas*, Washington Post (May 12, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2022/hud-texas-disaster-discrimination/>; Thomas Frank, *Floods, Then Bias: Inside an Unfair FEMA Climate Program*, Politico (May 27, 2022), <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/27/unfair-fema-climate-program-floods-00032080>.

I also wanted to thank Commissioner Carr for his thoughtful leadership on this item, and Chairwoman Rosenworcel for the same. Job well done.