

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *The Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and the Connect USVI Fund, WC Docket No. 18-143, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (October 27, 2022).*

Last week, I had the opportunity to visit Puerto Rico. It was just a month after Hurricane Fiona wreaked havoc on the island with record rainfall and landslides. It also left much of Puerto Rico in the dark, with many of its residents stuck without power during and after the storm.

In times like these, staying connected takes on new urgency. I saw that firsthand, not just during this trip to Puerto Rico, but during a similar trip I took nearly five years ago when I visited after Hurricane Maria. What strikes me most is that some of the same areas I saw during that last trek to the island were hit again during the most recent storm.

On this trip I got to spend time with Governor Pedro Pierluisi, officials charged with emergency response, members of the Puerto Rico Telecommunications Regulatory Board, and providers from across the island to learn more about how communications fared in the wake of this most recent hurricane. The message I heard in every meeting was clear: Though the devastation from this most recent storm was real and there is more work to be done, this time around communications networks were more resilient and restoration was more rapid. One big reason for that is during the last three years, carriers have been able to use support from the Federal Communications Commission's Bringing Puerto Rico Together Fund to build greater resiliency and redundancy in their networks. This fund has helped speed recovery and keep residents connected in the most recent hurricane.

It is the kind of effort you want to keep going. So today we adopt a rulemaking to explore how support for mobile and fixed broadband providers in Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands can continue, because restoring, hardening, and expanding communications infrastructure is vital everywhere in this country, the Caribbean included.

This rulemaking was the product of a lot of work across the agency, including from Theodore Burmeister, Rebekah Douglas, Nathan Eagan, Jodie Griffin, Trent Harkrader, Jesse Jachman, Dangkhua Nguyen, Hayley Steffen, and Suzanne Yelen from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Garnet Hanly, Susannah Larson, John Lockwood, and Matthew Warner from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Malena Barzilai, Andrea Kearney, Doug Klein, Richard Mallen, Keith McCrickard, Linda Oliver, and William Richardson from the Office of General Counsel; Pramesh Jobanputra, Stacy Jordan, Eugene Kiselev, Cher Li, and Donald Stockdale from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Justin Cain, Michael Connelly, Deb Jordan, William Kang, Minsoo Kim, Lauren Kravetz, Ahmed Lahjouji, Nicole McGinnis, Erika Olsen, Austin Randazzo, and James Wiley.