

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ**

Re: *Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, GN Docket No. 22-69 (Nov. 15, 2023).

We are the rule, not the exception. A friend shared this saying with me last week, and it resonated with me, especially as I had the opportunity to reflect about what we are doing here today. Two years ago, Congress came together, and passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, investing \$65 billion to ensure that everyone in America has access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet.

In making this historic investment in our country and our future, Congress recognized two things that many of us have long known. First, high-speed broadband is essential to full participation in modern life in the United States and we must invest to ensure that everyone has affordable, reliable access. And second, we must ensure that equal access to broadband is enjoyed by all, particularly communities that have been historically underserved.

In other words, Congress recognized that connectivity for all—is the rule, not the exception. And Congress recognized that access for historically underserved communities—communities of color, low-income communities, rural communities, Tribal, and Latino communities—needs to be the rule, not the exception. As we make historic investments in our nation’s infrastructure that will impact generations to come, we must prioritize digital equity, along with our other guiding policy principles—promoting economic opportunity, competition and innovation, and protecting consumers. In recognition of this moment, Congress understood that money alone was not enough to close the digital divide, and directed the Commission to adopt rules to prevent and eliminate digital discrimination.

And that is exactly what we do here today. This *Report and Order* is the culmination of two years of tremendous thought and work. We are implementing a bipartisan directive from Congress to facilitate equal access to broadband and prevent digital discrimination of access to communities based on income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin. While there are details to sort out, the most important thing is that we start. We are committed to working with consumers and providers to ensure that we accomplish the ultimate goal of this statute—facilitating equal access to broadband.

I want to thank the Chairwoman for her leadership in proposing these rules, establishing the Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination, and recognizing the need to bring in experts such as Brad Berry and Lisa Edwards to ensure that we are getting this right. I also would like to thank the Chairwoman, Commissioner Starks and Bureau staff for the collaborative efforts to implement changes to Commission processes and reflect such changes in the draft to address stakeholder concerns about how the rules adopted today will be implemented. Last but certainly not least, I thank the FCC staff throughout the agency that worked on this item.