

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Achieving 100% Wireless Handset Model Hearing Aid Compatibility; Improvements to Benchmarks and Related Requirements Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets*, WT Docket Nos. 23-388, 15-285 (terminated), Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (December 13, 2023)

Hearing loss is a big deal. More than 37 million Americans have some form of hearing difficulty. Among older adults it is especially prevalent, and it is also common among veterans, particularly those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. But technology is also a big deal, and we can use it to make sure those struggling with hearing loss have access to modern communications.

While the agency has been at work on this for some time, today we reach a new milestone. That is because in this rulemaking we make clear that in the United States we believe it is possible for 100 percent of mobile wireless handsets to be fully compatible with hearing aids. That means every mobile handset that is imported or used in this country is accessible to everyone with hearing challenges. This is the right thing to do. It is also the right time to do it. Because access to hearing aids has never been easier. Just over a year ago, the Food and Drug Administration took steps to pave the way for a new category of over-the-counter hearing aids. This has made hearing aids more accessible and affordable than ever before. So now let's make wireless handsets work for those with hearing aids like never before.

I appreciate the educational and research institutions, equipment manufacturers, wireless carriers, and advocates for those with hearing loss who have worked with the Hearing Aid Compatibility Task Force to get us to this point. It is historic. And in a nod to the past, I want to acknowledge that it was 50 years ago this year that this kind of work on accessibility began in earnest when the Organization for the Use of the Telephone was founded by two senior citizens seeking to ensure public payphones were hearing-aid compatible. We follow in their footsteps.

Thank you also to the staff behind this rulemaking, including Saurbh Chhabra, Barbara Esbin, Garnet Hanly, Eli Johnson, Susannah Larson, John Lockwood, Jennifer Salhus, and Joel Taubenblatt from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Robert Aldrich, Diane Burstein, Darryl Cooper, Alejandro Roark, and Suzy Rosen Singleton from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Ron Repasi, Justin Rison, Dana Shaffer, and Jim Szeliga from the Office of Engineering and Technology; William Huber, Michael Janson, Doug Klein, and Anjali Singh from the Office of General Counsel; Patrick Brogan, Judith Dempsey, Douglas Galbi, Kim Makuch, Catherine Matraves, Giulia McHenry, Molly Schwarz, Emily Talaga, and Weiren Wang from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Michael Gussow, Joy Ragsdale, and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.