

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Video Description: Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010*, MB Docket No. 11-43, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (March 16, 2023)

I frequently speak about the importance of ensuring that all Americans have access to communications technology. Universal service is the cornerstone of the law that established the FCC, the Communications Act of 1934, and that principle – understood broadly – underlies many of our actions to this day. From administering and conducting outreach for the Affordable Connectivity Program, to regulating and funding telecommunications relay services, to expanding and enforcing closed captioning and audio description requirements – all of these efforts are motivated by that long-term, animating principle.

So it's only appropriate that today we make a long-term commitment to bringing the benefit of audio description to all Americans who are blind or visually impaired, wherever they live. This technology makes video accessible by inserting narrative descriptions of key visual elements into television programming, so that everyone can appreciate moments like costuming choices, facial expressions, and visual gags. We've seen – and reported to Congress on – audio description's benefits in the largest markets. Today, consistent with our prior actions and as contemplated by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, or CVAA, we propose to bring those benefits to all 210 DMAs – the entire country – on a phased approach. Or to put it another way, we propose to make the service of audio description universal.

My thanks to the staff of the Media Bureau for their ongoing oversight of the reinstatement and expansion of the audio description requirements under the CVAA over the last decade plus, and for their good work on this item. It has my strong support.