

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *In the Matter of Single Network Future: Supplemental Coverage from Space, Space Innovation*, GN Docket No. 23-65, IB Docket No. 22-271, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (March 16, 2023)

As we reach for new heights in the space economy, I'm proud that American companies are continuing to lead the way. Satellite-cellular partnerships are just the latest example. By my count, they involve at least three established U.S. LEO operators, several U.S. satellite startups, leading U.S. handset and software companies, a U.S. chipmaker, and of course, our wireless carriers. That doesn't even include the U.S. satellite companies that have announced plans to deliver satellite 5G on their own or companies that have yet to announce their plans as they explore these capabilities.

As you've now heard, the satellite SOS feature on an iPhone 14 allowed a couple to reach help after their car crashed 300 feet into a canyon, with no cell service, deep in the Angeles National Forest. In the future, we're bound to see more of these examples, not just from motorists and parkgoers but from people leading their everyday lives. But the potential here goes beyond just emergency access in a rural or Tribal area, as critical as that capability may be. In particular, integrated terrestrial-satellite connectivity could also lead to a more robust and powerful IoT. I've heard time and again that the lack of coverage in the fields is holding back precision agriculture, a concern that I know many in Congress share. And don't forget the potential security benefits. In fact, the U.S. Space Force just announced plans to create a "satellite-to-cellular marketplace" so that our men and women in uniform can benefit from these systems, both on and behind the front lines. That the marketplace is intended to leverage commercial solutions should have us all stop and take notice.

How far the capability advances remains to be seen, and critical questions remain about its ultimate level of performance and the delivery models that will prevail. But given the potential here, and the surge in recent activity, we are right to make sure our rules follow suit. That's why I strongly support today's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. The NPRM proposes a new framework for offering Supplemental Coverage from Space, or SCS. If adopted, the rules would allow satellites to step in and provide connectivity where terrestrial coverage is unavailable using terrestrial spectrum, as if they were a seamless component of the terrestrial network itself.

But building a framework that works for every conceivable commercial arrangement and every technology is no easy feat and risks bogging down progress as we work toward new rules. To address this concern, the NPRM smartly proposes a narrow set of initial entry criteria so that we can move full speed ahead on proposals that raise the fewest technical challenges, while seeking comment on how one day we might broaden the scope.

I'm glad my colleagues accepted my edits to clarify that in taking this approach, we in no way propose to shut the door on systems that do not meet our initial criteria. We've already seen signs of interest in SCS from wireless carriers that do not have nationwide spectrum, and from carriers that do but believe their non-nationwide holdings offer a better fit for the service. We've also seen interest in SCS from satellite operators that are still experimenting or do not yet have a commercial license covering the full scale of their system. And we've seen smaller and regional carriers raise concerns about being left behind, even if they join forces in the same channel to clear the way for a competitive offering. None of these scenarios would meet the initial criteria we propose due to their added complexity. But in a

marketplace this dynamic, we shouldn't stall innovation as parties work to meet the policy considerations we lay out today—especially with technologies that have the potential to improve our safety and security and bridge the digital divide.

I thank the Commission staff who worked hard to develop this outstanding proposal. It has my full support.