

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Affordable Connectivity Program*, WC Docket No. 21-450, Sixth Report and Order (Aug. 3, 2023).

Here at the FCC we have done something big. We built the Affordable Connectivity Program. It is the largest broadband affordability effort in our Nation's history. As a result, more than 19.8 million low-income households across the country are now getting the help they need to get online and stay online. That means that over 19.8 million families have the internet access they need for work, healthcare, school and so much more.

There are ACP subscribers in every state and every territory. That includes rural communities. In fact, more than 2.8 million ACP households are in rural counties. But that figure alone does not paint the full picture. Because, as one study has demonstrated, rural households are actually signing up at a higher rate than their urban peers.

That does not mean it is always easy. In many rural communities, it is still costly to deploy and maintain broadband service. In a nod to this reality, in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Congress tasked us with developing a way for households in high-cost areas to receive more than just the standard up-to-\$30 a month ACP discount on internet service and, if needed, provide a larger discount of up-to-\$75 a month.

Today, we put this special discount for rural households in place. Consistent with the law, we make this support available strictly in the "high-cost areas" that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration is charged with identifying as part of their management of the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program. This is information we expect NTIA to make publicly available shortly. In addition, we offer it to providers only after they have demonstrated a "particularized economic hardship" under the law, meaning that they are unable to cover the costs of maintaining the operation of their network at the standard discount level.

One final note. We are laser focused on protecting the integrity and success of the Affordable Connectivity Program. That is why in implementing this aspect of the law today, we put in place safeguards recommended by the Office of Inspector General to ensure that the high-cost area benefit works the way Congress intended.

For today's effort, I want to thank Allison Baker, Cheryl Callahan, Jessica Campbell, Jodie Griffin, Travis Hahn, Trent Harkrader, Diane G. Holland, Felicity Keeley, Billy Layton, Benjamin Nashed, Terri Natoli, Hayley Steffen, Noah Stein, Kesha Woodward, and Eric Wu from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Bambi Kraus from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Mark Azic, Joanna Fister, Eugene Kiselev, Eric Ralph, and Maciej Wachala from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Malena Barzilai, Rick Mallen, Bill Richardson, and Chin Yoo from the Office of General Counsel; Georgina Feigen, Pamela Gallant, Kalun Lee, Mindy Littell, and Pam Slipakoff from the Enforcement Bureau; Cara Grayer and Joy Ragsdale from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities; Mindy Ginsburg from the Office of the Managing Director; and Barbara Esbin from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau.