
**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

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

As I've long stated, the Affordable Connectivity Program must connect Americans everywhere, including those living in rural areas. That's why I've been pleased to see ACP make inroads in rural communities across the nation. As of this week, all fifty states have at least 14,000 households enrolled, and 37 states have 100,000 enrolled. Several thousand rural zip codes, and more than 80 percent of non-metro counties, have at least one hundred households enrolled. In fact, a recent program performance model shows that [230,000 more rural households](#) have signed up than statistically predicted.

We need to bank and build on that progress. ACP's continued success in rural America will do more than help millions of rural families get and stay connected, as if that weren't enough. It also will spell good news for rural deployment efforts, chief among them the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program. As I've noted before, Congress designed ACP and BEAD to work as a pair. By helping more users get and stay on the network, ACP reduces the size of the funding gap that states will have to bridge—by as much as [25 percent](#) according to a recent study. In that way, ACP makes each state's BEAD allocation travel much, much further.

As for the step we take here today, Congress instructed us to establish a Affordable Connectivity Program high-cost area benefit. Implementing the program that Congress established as Congress directed is important to me. So is making sure that the program is available to all who need it.