STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL

Re: *Expediting Initial Processing of Satellite and Earth Station Applications*, *Space Innovation*; IB Docket No. 22-411, IB Docket No. 22-271; Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (September 21, 2023)

It was just a month ago that we learned about the deadly wildfires in Hawai'i. The stories that came out of Lahaina are harrowing. When I was first hired on Capitol Hill, I worked for Senator Daniel Inouye. I spent a lot of time in the Aloha State. It was definitely not a hardship assignment. Hawai'i is so lush in so many places, it is almost impossible to imagine flames rising on the western coast of Maui. But they did. So we keep in our thoughts those who lost homes and loved ones and those who now need to rebuild. We also need to pay attention to how people assisted one another in this crisis. Because it is important to understand what warnings worked and what systems helped save lives.

When the fires were raging, five young people aged 18 to 30 found themselves trapped in a white van near the outlet mall in Lahaina. The skies were smoky. It was not clear where to go or what to do, so they decided to drive toward the ocean. But the roads to the water were blocked, and poor visibility quickly deteriorated into no visibility. They were stuck in a sea of flames with nowhere to go. Terrestrial wireless services were knocked out so there was no way to call 911 for help. The van was hot and getting hotter. The situation seemed helpless.

But this crew of five young people survived. They are alive today thanks to new technology. Their phone had a new feature—the ability to connect directly to emergency personnel by bypassing ground-based communications and instead using satellite signals delivered from space. At 6:14 PM their message asking for help reached first responders along with their location. By 6:47 PM they sent a follow-up message to the dispatchers to say they had been rescued.

That's incredible. When we talk about the benefits of space-based innovation, it is easy to crow about the value of United States leadership and the value of growing the more than half-a-trillion dollar space economy. But it is important to remember that if we do this right, we are unlocking advances that have the power to make us safer in crisis and stronger in day-to-day life.

At this agency every day we get to see how innovation is changing the way we connect, and how those connections fuel everything in modern civic and commercial life. You could argue that nowhere are these innovations growing as fast as they are in space.

Consider the numbers. Right now we have applications for more than 56,000 satellites pending before the FCC. That is twice the number of applications we had just four years ago. On top of that, we are seeing new applications for novel space activities like lunar landers, space tugs that can deploy other satellites, and space antenna farms that can relay communications.

So we made some changes. We launched the Space Bureau to support United States leadership in the space economy, promote long-term technical capacity to address satellite policies, and improve our coordination with other agencies. We facilitated satellite spectrum

sharing by modernizing our approach to processing rounds. We updated our approach to orbital debris in order to shorten the decades-old 25-year guideline for deorbiting satellites post-mission. We are also exploring how to support greater direct satellite-to-smartphone communication and bring our spectrum policies into a single network future. And we launched an inquiry into how communications can support In-Space Servicing, Assembly, and Manufacturing activities—or ISAM—like re-fueling, inspecting, and repairing satellites in orbit and capturing or removing debris.

It's a lot. Today we take another important step forward because we streamline the processing of commercial satellite applications. It is a new era so we eliminate old rules that no longer meet the moment and establish clear timeframes for placing space and earth station applications on public notice. This makes our process easier to understand for existing players and new entrants alike. On top of this, the Space Bureau is launching a Transparency Initiative with frequently asked questions, how-to-videos, workshops and more—aimed at providing applicants with the tools and knowledge they need to get their applications filed. Our goal is to make it easier for new companies to get the authorizations they need to enter the market.

By streamlining our process for commercial satellite applications, I know we can foster more of the kind of boundary-breaking innovation that brought five people home through unimaginable circumstances just a few weeks ago. So let's keep at it.

Thank you to the staff who have made this latest entry in our space innovation agenda possible, including Clay DeCell, Steve Duall, Jennifer Gilsenan, Franco Hinjosa, Julie Kearney, Whitney Lohmeyer, Karl Kensinger, Julia Malette, Kerry Murray, Jeanine Poltronieri, Troy Tanner and Merissa Velez from the Space Bureau; Jason Koslofsky, Jeremy Marcus and Michael Rhodes from the Enforcement Bureau; Joy Ragsdale and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities; Kate Matraves and Aleks Yankelevich from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Jamie Coleman, Patrick Forster, Howard Griboff, JC Montenegro, Ira Keltz, Nick Oros, and Jamison Prime from the Office of Engineering and Technology; Susan Aaron, David Konczal, Andrea Kearney, Anjali Singh and Jeff Steinberg from the Office of the General Counsel; and Simon Banyai, Stephen Buenzow, Peter Daronco, Jessica Greffenius, Kari Hicks, Alice Koethe, John Lockwood, Jon Markman, John Schauble and Blaise Scinto from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau.