

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Broadband Connectivity and Maternal Health — Implementation of the Data Mapping to Save Moms' Lives Act*, GN Docket No. 23-309, Notice of Inquiry (October 19, 2023)

In the nearly nine decades that the Federal Communications Commission has been in existence, I have the distinct honor of being the first woman to permanently lead the agency. I am also the first mother to run the agency. I am totally proud of these firsts. But I am keenly aware that when it comes to female leadership and valuing the lives of women in this country, we still have work to do.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in our treatment of maternal mortality. The United States is the only industrialized country with a rising level of maternal mortality. And deaths from pregnancy-related causes strike women of color and those who live in rural communities especially hard.

This is a crisis. It demands our attention. It requires everyone to identify how they can help because so many studies show that most pregnancy-related deaths are preventable. And what's more, access to broadband-enabled solutions like telehealth can play a role in improving maternal outcomes. That is why earlier this year we used authority under the Data Mapping to Save Moms' Lives Act to update the agency's Mapping Broadband Health in America platform to include maternal health data.

Historically, this platform has focused on how broadband connectivity impacts chronic diseases like diabetes and smoking-related illness; access to medical, dental, or mental health care; and deaths from opioid or drug use. Now it includes data points on maternal mortality, severe maternal morbidity, maternal age, and access to maternal care. When you combine this information with data on broadband access and adoption, it allows you to identify areas where we can promote telemedicine to improve outcomes in maternal health and areas where broader deployment is needed to support care for those who are pregnant.

This updated platform is an important tool. To ensure we use it to its full potential, we are initiating this inquiry. That's because we know that there is more we can do with this data so that it provides policymakers, healthcare professionals, and groups advocating for better outcomes for mothers with information that can help save lives. If there are ways this data can further assist efforts to address the maternal health crisis, we want to know. Above all, we want to offer our support because—take it from a mother—the current state of maternal mortality in this country is unacceptable.

Thank you to those who championed this effort from Congress, including Senator Rosen, Senator Fischer, Senator Young, Senator Schatz, Representative Bilirakis, Representative Blunt Rochester, and former Representative Butterfield.

Thank you also to the agency's Connect2Health Task Force Chair Michele Ellison for leading our efforts to improve this mapping resource, as well as David Ahern, Ben Bartolome, Terry Cavanaugh, Michael Gibbons, Irene Ly, Karen Onyeije, Marcus Maher, Arielle Mancuso, Richard Mallen, Brayden Parker, Anjali Singh, Elliot Tarloff, and Chin Yoo of the Office of General Counsel; Allison Baker, Bryan Boyle, Jodie Griffin, and Clint Highfill of the Wireline Competition Bureau; and Pat Brogan, Giulia McHenry, Steve Rosenberg, Emily Talaga, and Aleks Yankelevich of the Office of Economics and Analytics.