

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ**

Re: *Connect America Fund, Alaska Connect Fund, Universal Service Reform—Mobility Fund*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 23-328, 14-58, 09-197, WT Docket No. 10-208, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Report and Order (October 19, 2023)

I echo my colleagues' statements. Alaska is unique. Alaska is unique because of the many reasons my colleagues just noted—geography, size, rurality, remoteness. But Alaska is also unique because of its rich culture and long history of storytelling. As Alaska's Internet for All plan notes, without reliable, affordable high-speed connectivity – this rich culture is in danger of being lost. And while areas in Alaska are some of the most remote, and hardest to serve in the country, too much is at stake if we do not connect these communities.

That is why I support today's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. The Commission has long recognized the importance and uniqueness of deploying high-speed connectivity to Alaska, and doing so requires modifications to existing Universal Service tools. Now, armed with lessons learned from the past seven years, advancements in technology, and unprecedented investment – we have the opportunity to thoughtfully and efficiently determine the best ways that Universal Service Funds can support the next phase of broadband support in Alaska.

I look forward to a substantial record developing in this proceeding, and working together with the Alaska delegation, as well as my colleagues, to support affordable, reliable connectivity for Alaskans. Finally, many thanks to the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, and Office of Economics and Analytics for their work on this item.