

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Addressing the Homework Gap through the E-Rate Program*, WC Docket No. 21-31, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (November 1, 2023).

Last week, I spent time at the Brooklyn Public Library. It was bustling. This is a library with more than 850,000 active cardholders. It is a center for physical books, digital materials, access to information and access to culture. In fact, right now the library has a one-of-a-kind exhibit celebrating Brooklyn native Jay-Z and the 50th anniversary of hip hop. It was a treat to see a library so modern and thoughtful about serving its community.

Across the board, I think keeping our institutions modern is important. That is why we are taking a fresh look at the program we have to support libraries, known as E-Rate.

For more than two decades, E-Rate has been a quiet powerhouse. It has provided schools and libraries across the country—including the Brooklyn Public Library—with support for communications. As a result over the years it has helped millions of students and library patrons get online with access to high-speed internet service.

During the pandemic we saw the power of this kind of community-driven effort to help close the digital divide. Many schools and libraries found ways to build on their efforts to support internet access by loaning out Wi-Fi hotspots. Some used this agency's Emergency Connectivity Fund to do so. But this fund was a one-time effort that expires next year. However, it demonstrated what a modern library and modern school library can do to help a community learn without limits and keep connected.

Here we seek to build on that learning from the pandemic and modernize the E-Rate program. Specifically, we start a rulemaking to consider how both libraries and school libraries can loan out Wi-Fi hotspots across the country and support high-speed internet access for patrons and students in rural America, urban America, and everything in between. I believe we can make it a baseline that every library and school library has these hotspots for loan—and we can use E-Rate to do it.