

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Supporting Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence; Lifeline and Link Up Reform Modernization; Affordable Connectivity Program*, WC Docket Nos. 22-238, 11-42, 21-450, Report and Order (November 15, 2023).

Last week I traveled to Texas to visit the headquarters of the National Domestic Violence Hotline. You think you know strength and resilience. But to see in action those who work at the Hotline and the way they take in calls and respond to inquiries is extraordinary. They have a steely patience, a deep empathy, and a special skill providing guidance that helps women and men leave violent and abusive situations.

Their work is so important. Because according to the Hotline, one in four women in this country is a survivor of domestic violence. One in seven men, too. These are your friends, your family, and your neighbors. Every one of them needs a safe connection. And for those affected by domestic abuse, a phone is a lifesaver. It makes it possible to reach out for help. It is a gateway to building a new life, away from harm.

That is why we are focusing on the connection between survivors and communications. This is new for the Federal Communications Commission. We have never before dedicated our resources to identifying how to help securely connect survivors of domestic violence. But in July of last year we began an inquiry to explore this intersection and ask what we could do. Then Congress stepped in and passed the Safe Connections Act, giving us new tools to address communications for survivors. So in February of this year we started a rulemaking to put this new authority to use. And today, we adopt the FCC's first-ever rules to help with safe communications for survivors of domestic violence.

With these rules, we do three things. First, we address family plans. For many of us, family plans cut costs and make wireless communications simple with one bill for multiple phones. But for survivors, these plans are fraught. They can be used to monitor calls and location. They can be a tool for control. So we are setting up a way for survivors to swiftly and securely separate their phone lines from family plans. Second, we are making sure that survivors can safely call domestic violence hotlines by removing these numbers from call and text logs so that they can reach out without fear of discovery from their abusers. Third, we are making sure struggling survivors can receive low-cost phone service through our Lifeline program for six months after separation. These are meaningful changes and across the board we appreciate the work of the wireless industry to ensure they happen.

We would not be here today without the input and support of so many people working to end domestic violence. Let me start by thanking the heroes at the National Domestic Violence Hotline who I had the privilege to meet in Texas. Let me also extend my gratitude to others I met during this visit, including representatives from the Texas Council on Family Violence, Asian Family Support Services of Austin, Family Violence Prevention Services San Antonio, Hays Caldwell Women's Center, SAFE Alliance, and Texas Health and Human Services. I also want to thank the many organizations we worked with here in Washington, including the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, The National Center for Victims of Crime, the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Mary's Center, and My Sister's Place, which provided my office with the opportunity to spend some time at their shelter, which is a sanctuary for survivors right here in our own backyard. These relationships matter. Because what we are doing today is a start. We want to ensure this community stays in contact with us so we can make sure our policies work and support the connections survivors need.

I also want to thank Senator Schatz, Senator Fischer, Representative Eshoo, Representative Walberg, and Representative Kuster for championing the Safe Connections Act, plus those at the agency who worked to make this possible, including: David Brodian, Jessica Campbell, Adam Copeland, Ty Covey, Denise Golumbaski, Jodie Griffin, Melissa Kirkel, Ed Krachmer, Chris Laughlin, Jodie May, Nick Page, Mason Shefa, and Noah Stein from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Garnet Hanly from the

Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Eduard Bartholme, Diane Burstein, Aaron Garza, Eliot Greenwald, Suzy Rosen Singleton, Kristi Thornton, and Bill Wallace from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Hunter Deely, Kalun Lee, Phil Rosario, and Kristi Thompson from the Enforcement Bureau; Malena Barzilai, Andrea Kearney, Andrea Kelly, Doug Klein, Rick Mallen, Karen Schroeder, Anjali Singh, Jeffrey Steinberg, Elliot Tarloff, and Chin Yoo from the Office of General Counsel; Mark Azic, Eugene Kiselev, Eric Ralph, Emily Talaga, and Maciej Wachala from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Joycelyn James and Joy Ragsdale from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.