

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

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).

Today marks a significant milestone in our unwavering commitment to support survivors of domestic violence—a pervasive issue that transcends race, gender, and sexual orientation. A staggering number of individuals—over 12 million annually in the United States alone¹—live this harrowing reality. With one in three women and one in four men experiencing such violence in their lifetimes,² the urgency to provide timely and effective assistance is more pressing than ever.

The Commission's implementation of the Safe Connections Act of 2022 is a crucial step in this direction. It assures survivors that in a time of need, they will have secure communication. The ability to seek help without fear or the risk of being tracked by an abuser is truly a lifeline. Our new rules mandating that providers exclude calls and texts to survivor assistance hotlines from consumer call logs ensures that survivors can reach out to vital resources, like the National Domestic Violence Hotline, with confidence and privacy.

Moreover, we recognize the acute challenges survivors face, particularly where an urgent escape means resources are critical but documentation may be out of reach. By integrating temporary communications services into the Lifeline program, we are extending a critical helping hand to those in financial hardship.

I am immensely proud of the Commission's dedication to this cause. This decision is more than just about access to communication services; it's about providing survivors with the safety and privacy they need to utilize these resources. Thank you to Senators Schatz, Fischer, Blumenthal, Scott, Rosen, and Congresswomen Kuster and Eshoo for their leadership in passing the Safe Connections Act. I extend my gratitude to the staff for their exceptional work and approve.

¹ The National Domestic Hotline, *Domestic Violence Statistics*, available at <https://www.thehotline.org/stakeholders/domestic-violence-statistics/#:~:text=Over%201%20in%203%20women,intimate%20partner%20in%20their%20lifetime> (last visited Nov. 13, 2023).

² *Id.*