

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion*, Notice of Inquiry, GN Docket No. 25-223.

While I have concerns over the potential change of direction this FCC may soon take in how we fulfill our obligation to provide a clear and accurate picture of broadband availability in this country, I am nevertheless supporting this Notice of Inquiry (NOI) so the public can weigh in on this issue. How we measure this country's progress of connecting everyone, everywhere to the number one tool to participate in modern day life is important, and we should not retreat from the bold and forward-looking vision this agency had previously embraced.

Under this NOI, the FCC questions whether recent changes that provided a more accurate picture of broadband availability, such as broadband affordability and broadband adoption, are even needed. This is after the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) lapsed, which forced many households to choose between continuing their broadband service or paying for food or medicine. For that reason, I am glad we were successful in seeking public input on whether broadband can truly be considered available if it isn't affordable, and I look forward to that record.

Some point to existing law to argue that availability is the only metric Congress allows to measure broadband deployment success. But the law does not require this agency to view broadband availability with one eye closed and the other one half-open. That argument ignores recent legislation like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which was enacted to broaden the scope of that approach. As the Commerce Department seeks to redefine the goals of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, one must wonder if this is a coordinated effort to roll out the "Mission Accomplished" banner as millions remain without access to a fast, reliable, and affordable way to participate in the main aspects of modern life.

Just last week, this Administration released an AI plan that looked at "winning the AI race" in ways that would "usher in a new golden age" of "economic competitiveness and national security for the American people." I wonder how that plan will square with the changes this FCC is envisioning in how it measures broadband deployment in this country. After all, for communities to benefit from the AI revolution, they must have the bandwidth that meets the high-capacity needs that AI data centers demand.

While we often hear the argument that it is important to pursue a "technology-neutral approach," that is rarely what those touting this path really mean. Instead, what we see is an effort to overcorrect by overemphasizing one technological approach versus another. Ultimately, we must recognize that there is great promise in satellite and fixed wireless technology, and they can both serve areas with immediate need. However, these two approaches are capacity-limited, and are not the silver bullet to close the digital divide. On the other hand, fiber service has more upfront costs and is not a feasible approach for every community. But in many cases, it is a better long-term investment for building the capacity we need to compete as a global leader in emerging technologies like AI. The sooner we realize we do not need to be confined to a single universal choice, and that common sense should prevail over technological tribalism, the better the public will be served in the long run.

Under the previous Administration, the FCC correctly set a benchmark of 100/20 Mbps—moving us away from a measurement of mediocrity toward a respectable floor where we

can build momentum for future innovation and continued global leadership. Under that same approach, the FCC also set the long-term goal of 1 Gigabit per second (Gbps) download speed, which set this country apart in ways that signaled a forward-looking approach to global technological competitiveness. It reflected this nation's history of striving to do big and bold things. Nothing prevents us from continuing that tradition. Arguments that seek to paint that goal as an effort to "pick winners and losers" are as nonsensical as having told President Kennedy's NASA to abandon the space race's goal of reaching the Moon out of fear of failure or because of it cost too much.

In America, we do things not because they're easy, but because they're hard. Choosing the easy way out here would be a disservice to that longstanding commitment to excellence.