

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER OLIVIA TRUSTY**

Re: *Modernizing Suspension and Debarment Rules*, Report and Order, Direct Final Rule, and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, GN Docket No. 19-309 (March 26, 2026)

All Americans deserve access to modern communications networks and services. Achieving that goal requires advanced infrastructure deployed nationwide, including in underserved areas and services that are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The FCC's funding programs are central to these efforts. And, with that responsibility comes a clear obligation: to protect these programs from waste, fraud, and abuse by ensuring that participants meet the highest standards of integrity and reliability.

We owe this duty first and foremost to the public, whose contributions support these programs. The Universal Service Fund and Telecommunications Relay Service programs together distribute roughly \$10 billion annually. Americans have every right to expect that these funds are used as Congress intended, not diverted or misused by bad actors.

We also owe this duty to the programs' beneficiaries. In my travels, I have seen first-hand the critical importance of connectivity and access, from visiting health care providers and schools in Mississippi and Alaska, to hearing from providers serving rural communities in Texas and Kansas, to seeing the work of TRS providers in Utah. The FCC's funding programs advance vital statutory goals, and all program participants, from service providers to end-users, depend on funds being used for their intended purpose.

When untrustworthy actors remain eligible to participate in these programs, they put those outcomes at risk. Unwary beneficiaries may unexpectedly face disrupted service, denied support, or revoked funding. Strengthening our suspension and debarment processes helps prevent these harms and reinforces the efforts of beneficiaries to comply with the program requirements.

Today's action is both necessary and timely. It has been nearly 20 years since the Commission last updated these rules. This Order modernizes our framework by building on established, government-wide rules while tailoring them to the FCC's unique programs and responsibilities. It also provides greater transparency and clarity so stakeholders understand how these processes work and what to expect.

I look forward to seeing this process in action and to reviewing the record on what other improvements we might make to these rules in response to the Further Notice.

I thank the Office of General Counsel for their great work on this item.