

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER OLIVIA TRUSTY**

Re: *Reforming the High-Cost Program for an All-IP Future, Connect America Fund: A National Broadband Plan for our Future High-Cost Universal Support*, WC Docket Nos. 26-96, 10-90, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (May 20, 2026).

Fifteen years ago, the FCC began requiring that high-cost universal service support be directed toward investment in modern, broadband-capable networks. The Commission recognized that doing so would help accelerate broadband deployment to unserved and underserved communities across the country. Since then, the Commission's efforts have been complemented by other federal initiatives, including BEAD, as well as state broadband deployment programs and substantial private sector investment in advanced communications infrastructure.

For decades, achieving universal broadband connectivity has been a national priority. But as networks evolve and the communications marketplace continues its transition to all-IP technologies, we must once again evaluate the future role of the Commission's high-cost support mechanisms. This assessment is particularly timely as Congress considers broader universal service reform, and as certain high-cost programs approach expiration. The issues raised by the IP transition also underscore the need to begin this conversation now.

Looking ahead, it is important that we carefully consider where support will still be needed and how it can be targeted most effectively. Only by doing so can we remain responsible stewards of universal service funds while continuing to fulfill Section 254's mandate to preserve and advance universal service.

The broad inquiry we initiate today reflects the range of important questions surrounding the future of high-cost support. How should the Commission address any remaining deployment gaps? What role should support play in helping providers manage ongoing operations and maintenance costs and ensuring reasonably comparable rates in rural areas? How should we account for the investments necessary to keep rural networks resilient and secure? And how can we help ensure that rural communities are positioned to participate fully in the opportunities presented by emerging technologies, including AI?

I look forward to working with my colleagues, Commission staff, and industry, consumer, and government stakeholders as we consider the Commission's next steps in this area. And I thank the Wireline Competition Bureau for its work on this important item.