

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER OLIVIA TRUSTY**

Re: *Promoting Telehealth in Rural America*, WC Docket 17-310, Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Order (Aug. 6, 2026).

For generations, access to healthcare in rural America has depended as much on geography as medicine itself. A century ago, patients often relied on the country doctor traveling long distances over dirt roads to make a house call. Today, broadband is making it possible for medicine to return to that tradition, not by bringing the doctor down the road, but by bringing the doctor's expertise directly into a patient's home. In many ways, telehealth is the modern house call.

On my first trip as an FCC Commissioner, I visited the University of Mississippi Medical Center. UMMC's Center for Telehealth demonstrates how high-speed broadband networks can deliver quality, affordable, life-saving care to patients in their homes while connecting healthcare providers across rural communities.

My subsequent travels have only reinforced the vital connection between connectivity and quality healthcare. In Alaska, I saw firsthand the importance of broadband-enabled medical care in some of our nation's most remote communities, including Eek and the Kenai Peninsula. In Kansas, I met with broadband providers working to ensure that disabled veterans can access the healthcare services they need. In Nebraska, staff at Boys Town National Hotline described how broadband has expanded their ability to provide mental health support through online communications and digital resources in addition to traditional phone and text services. And just last month in New Mexico, I heard about the transformative role broadband and telemedicine can play in improving access to care on rural Tribal lands.

These conversations have underscored that reliable connectivity is an essential component of modern healthcare.

Today's item continues the Commission's efforts to fulfill Congress's directive by improving the Rural Healthcare program so it better serves the communities covered by healthcare providers while targeting limited federal resources to where they are needed most. I appreciate the item's focus on providing greater clarity regarding program eligibility, streamlining administrative processes where appropriate, and ensuring that supported networks can meet the performance and resiliency demands of modern healthcare.

As telehealth applications and services continue to advance and evolve, the Commission's policies should advance and evolve, too, so that healthcare providers can keep delivering high-quality care to patients regardless of where they live. I look forward to reviewing the record of this proceeding and my thanks to the Wireline Competition Bureau for their excellent work on this item.