

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Addressing the Homework Gap through the E-Rate Program*, WC Docket No. 23-31, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (July 18, 2024).

We all know that, for our children, access to broadband at both school and home is vital to reaching their potential. Their education simply doesn't stop when they exit the school building. Instruction, homework, group projects, extra assignments, and more all happen outside of the physical school grounds, and often outside of official school hours. Ensuring that students have the tools to harness this power is critical for their academic development.

Unfortunately, millions of students still lack this power. They do not have access to the Internet, or have inadequate service at home. This number has only increased since the expiration of the Affordable Connectivity Program, where over 35% of the 23 million households enrolled reported using their ACP service to attend school or do homework. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress recognized the need for students to access the Internet at home for school and created the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF). It proved a fantastic test run for the program we adopt today, showcasing the need to help students outside of their physical school. While ECF sunset at the end of June, the lessons we learned from it have been incorporated into the rules we adopt today to support the use of E-Rate funding for hotspots for those in need.

I am proud to support this Order, which, I note, includes many safeguards to limit the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse, and incentivizes E-Rate recipients to use their limited funds judiciously. I also appreciate the Chairwoman agreeing to my edits to add a section in the Further Notice seeking comment on adding cybersecurity and risk management obligations to providers that supply these hotspots to schools.

I thank the Commission staff for their great work on this item and approve.