

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL,
DISSENTING**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion*, GN Docket No. 18-238, 2019
Broadband Deployment Report.

It is simply not credible for the Federal Communications Commission to clap its hands and pronounce our broadband job done—and yet that is exactly what it does in this report today. By determining that under the law broadband deployment is reasonable and timely for all Americans, we not only fall short of our statutory responsibility, we show a cruel disregard for those who the digital age has left behind.

Broadband is more than a technology—it's a platform for opportunity. No matter who you are or where you live in this country, you need access to advanced communications to have a fair shot at 21st century success. That is why our responsibility to offer an honest assessment with this report is so disappointing.

This report deserves a failing grade. It concludes that broadband deployment is reasonable and timely throughout the United States. This will come as news to millions and millions of Americans who lack access to high-speed service at home. It will come as news to communities across the country that are struggling to secure the broadband they need for economic revitalization and growth. It will come as news to rural households and tribal areas that fear without change they will forever be consigned to the wrong side of the digital divide. It will come as news to urban areas where redlining has led to broadband deserts. It also will come as news to millions of students who fall into the homework gap because they lack the internet access needed for nightly schoolwork.

Moreover, it will come as news to governors, mayors, and legislators across the country working overtime to extend high-speed service to those outside its reach. It will come as news to members of Congress who in hearing after hearing have chided this agency for its inability to deliver the promise of broadband to communities they represent. Is it infrastructure week yet? Because there is no conversation in Washington regarding infrastructure that does not give prominent place to the work we have yet to do to reach everyone, everywhere with high-speed service.

Instead of this report, we should be issuing a candid appraisal of the work we have to do to bring broadband everywhere. This requires three things.

First, we need to stop relying on data we know is wrong. Putting aside the embarrassing fumble of the FCC blindly accepting incorrect data for the original version of this report, there are serious problems with its basic methodology. Time and again this agency has acknowledged the grave limitations of the data we collect to assess broadband deployment. If a service provider claims that they serve a single customer in a census block, our existing data practices assume that there is service throughout the census block. This is not right. It means the claim in this report that there are only 21 million people in the United States without broadband is fundamentally flawed. Consider that another recent analysis concluded that as many as 162 million people across the country do not use internet service at broadband speeds. Adding insult to injury, the same flawed data we rely on here is used to populate FCC broadband maps. For those keeping track, one cabinet official has described those maps as “fake news” and one Senator has suggested they be shredded and thrown into a lake.

Second, we need high standards. The future belongs to the bold. History demonstrates that when we set audacious goals we can do big things. It is time to commit to broadband goals that reflect not just where we are but where we are going. It has been four years since the FCC updated its broadband standard from 4 Megabits to 25 Megabits per second. Technology changes fast. In fact, three years ago, this country’s largest broadband provider began rolling out Gigabit service to just shy of 60 million homes and businesses. This agency needs to keep up. It’s time for the FCC to adopt a 100 Megabits per

second standard and set Gigabit speeds in our sight.

Third, we need to be honest about the state of what we have found. We will never manage problems we do not measure. Our ability to address the challenge of uneven internet access across the country is only made more challenging by our inability to be frank about the state of deployment today. Moreover, we need to be thoughtful about how impediments to adoption, like affordability, are an important part of the digital equity equation and our national broadband challenge.

In other words, there is an honorable way forward. But in this report the FCC fails its statutory duty. It fails to use the accurate data we need. It fails to set ambitious standards. Worse, it fails the American public by proclaiming mission accomplished when our lived experience tells us that too many people in this country in too many communities are being left behind. The rest of the world is not grading their progress with infrastructure on a curve. We shouldn't either.

I dissent.