

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Promoting Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Through Handset Unlocking Requirements and Policies*, WT Docket No. 24-186, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (July 18, 2024)

The bedrock of any healthy market has always been meaningful consumer choice. With it, companies compete for business by constantly improving and refining their products. Without it, consumers can be locked into expensive or outdated services that don't meet their needs. With this item, the Commission is taking an important step toward a more vibrant and competitive mobile marketplace.

For too long, consumers have faced confusing and disparate cell phone unlocking policies. This lack of consistency across carriers means some consumers can unlock their phones with relative ease, while others face significant barriers. It also means certain carriers are subject to mandatory unlocking requirements while others are free to dictate their own. This asymmetry is bad for both consumers and competition. By proposing a uniform 60-day unlocking policy, we're leveling the playing field for competition and empowering consumers. With an unlocked handset, consumers can choose the carrier that offers them the best value. But, a consistent unlocking policy isn't just good for consumers. For carriers, it'll better reward those offering the most innovative, affordable products and services.

However, as we move forward, we must also be mindful of the potential impacts on low-income consumers. While the device discounts offered in exchange for a required service plan commitment can sometimes lock consumers in place, they can also provide access to cutting-edge technology to those who might otherwise be unable to afford it. I'm glad we're asking these tough questions, and I look forward to reviewing the record that develops on this point. No matter what, we need to be thoughtful in ensuring that all consumers, no matter how much they make, have affordable access to the latest technology.

And finally I'm glad to see this item now requesting additional information about other barriers consumers may face when attempting to switch carriers.

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