



September 18, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Civil Rights Support for FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks

Majority Leader Schumer,

Thank you for your continued efforts to ensure our country has an equitable communications ecosystem that works for all communities regardless of race, income level, and geographic location. Our rapidly shifting digital age is presently and will continue to impact our communities' ability to thrive economically, socially, and politically. That is why the appointments in the telecommunications and technology sectors are more critical than ever. We were thrilled to see the United States Senate confirm Anna Gomez to serve as Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) because of her experience in this sector and her commitment to diversity and inclusion. However, to make certain that the FCC can continue to operate at full strength to serve the American public, **it is imperative and urgent that FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks is reconfirmed to his post at the Commission without delay.**

Commissioner Starks has been an exemplary partner to the civil rights community and has worked to center our policy concerns by ensuring we have a seat at the table while also incorporating our perspectives into his policy proposals, which have and will continue to drive real-world impact. As you and your Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle have experienced in your work with Commissioner Starks, he is dedicated to making sure that broadband is accessible, affordable, resilient, and secure. He championed the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and its predecessor, the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB), and he continues to address the affordability barrier that millions of families in America experience when trying to adopt high-speed internet at home. In fact, he extended the impact of the ACP by creating the "Your Home, Your Internet" pilot program because he recognizes the intersection of housing access and digital access and the massive disparities that exist for communities of color and low-income communications in both areas. This also demonstrates that Commissioner Starks has long recognized – even when Lifeline was the only connectivity subsidy – the need for better

interagency coordination to truly make the government work for the people most in need. His willingness to collaborate with our groups and to work with Congress to translate our ideas into policies demonstrate his continued dedication to equity and justice.

Further, Commissioner Starks also recognizes the importance of inclusivity in developing policy. It has been meaningful to our communities to see his dedication to issues impacting urban America and the experiences those communities face when accessing technology because those communities were not always incorporated in the dialogue surrounding the digital divide in this country. As it relates to his work in rural America, Commissioner Starks has focused on the unique experiences in the Black rural south and has elevated HBCUs and Black-owned businesses as a place for continued investments as we work collaboratively to close the digital divide. Additionally, he has worked to address systemic barriers to accessing careers in telecommunications and technology policy. In 2020, Commissioner Starks launched the Early Career Staff Diversity Initiative, which is a program developed to help diversify the next generation of policy leaders. This again demonstrates his unwavering commitment to communities of color.

Commissioner Starks has proven himself to be a true public servant who is dedicated to ensuring everyone in this country has equal access to communication services. He continues to receive our highest level of support to remain on the FCC and we encourage you to act swiftly to reconfirm him to his post, as this is critical to the future of our communities. If you have any questions, please contact Alisa Valentin, Senior Director of Technology and Telecommunications Policy at the National Urban League, at avalentin@nul.org.

Sincerely,

National Urban League
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC
Black Women's Roundtable
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Japanese American Citizens League
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC)
NAACP
National Action Network
National Black Justice Coalition
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Council of Negro Women (NCNW)
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Hispanic Media Coalition
Take Creative Control
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
UnidosUS
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry