



July 11, 2023

Senator Maria Cantwell

Chair

U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ted Cruz

Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 230 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, and its Media/Telecommunications Task Force, we write to convey our strong support for the nomination of Anna Gomez to serve as commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or commission) and the renomination of Commissioner Geoffrey Starks to continue serving as FCC commissioner. At a time when access to reliable, diverse news and information — as well as affordable broadband and communications — is paramount, a fully staffed FCC is a top priority for the nation and for the constituencies we represent. Both Ms. Gomez and Commissioner Starks are exemplary nominees and should be swiftly confirmed.

Universal and affordable access to telecommunications services and diverse media enables vital communications with family, friends, and employers; provides access to invaluable health information, emergency services, social services, and education; and promotes participation in our 21st century democracy and economy. Our coalition is committed to ensuring that media and telecommunications policy affirms and extends our nation's longstanding commitment to civil rights.

Anna Gomez's experience both inside and outside the FCC over the course of her long career reflects her strong qualifications for this role. She has more than 25 years of experience in telecommunications law and policy, and she has proven her commitment to protecting civil rights throughout her career — from her time at the FCC to her pro bono work while in private practice. She has more than a decade of direct experience at the FCC, serving as deputy chief of the International Bureau, senior legal advisor to then-Chairman William E. Kennard, former chair and vice chair of the FCC's Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment, and chair emeritus of the FCC's Communications Equity and Diversity Council. Ms. Gomez currently serves at the State Department's Bureau

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AAJC

President and CEO

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of Cyberspace and Digital Policy as senior advisor for international information and communications policy, a critical role in advancing the United States' interests related to telecommunications, innovation, economic growth, and national security.

Ms. Gomez, who would be the first Latino commissioner at the FCC in more than 20 years, would bring to the role demonstrable dedication to equity, diversity, and the advancement of the constituencies served by The Leadership Conference. During her time at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) where she served as deputy administrator and acting administrator for more than four years, she advocated for and created NTIA's first Diversity and Inclusion Council. She also represented the Hispanic National Bar Association as chair of the FCC Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment and chaired Wiley Rein's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee during her last five years at the firm.

Commissioner Starks' direct experience with the FCC, which includes four years as a commissioner and three years serving as assistant bureau chief in the Enforcement Bureau, demonstrates his strong qualifications to continue serving as FCC commissioner. During his time as commissioner, he has worked tirelessly to close the digital divide, and he was a fierce advocate of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) while creating the "Your Home, Your Internet" pilot program to increase awareness of ACP.¹ In addition to addressing issues around broadband affordability, Commissioner Starks has been a leader in the fight to end digital discrimination, playing a key role in launching the FCC's Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination.²

Beyond his commitment to closing the digital divide, Commissioner Starks has also championed equity and diversity on a wide range of issues, including diversifying the next generation of policy leaders through his Early Career Staff Diversity Initiative;³ finding policy pathways to ensure the influential media sector has a diverse workforce; and broadening the digital divide policy debates to elevate the way it intersects with HBCUs, the Black rural south, Black mental health, and Black-owned businesses.

Without confirmation of both of these highly qualified nominees this year, the FCC will be left with only three commissioners. The need for swift action on both these nominations together is therefore critical for advancement of important agency work. After nine months without a working majority, the FCC has a significant workload to tackle. The civil rights agenda at the FCC requires rapid, focused attention. For these reasons, we urge the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation to ensure that both are reported favorably to the full Senate. Should you have any questions, please contact Jonathan Walter, policy counsel for the media & tech program, at walter@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

¹ <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-creates-your-home-your-internet-pilot-program>

² <https://www.washingtoninformer.com/fcc-commissioner-geoffrey-starks-leading-assault-against-digital-redlining/>

³ <https://www.fcc.gov/document/commissioner-starks-early-career-diversity-initiative>



Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Japanese American Citizens League
National Action Network
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Urban League
PFLAG National
The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry
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Black Women’s Roundtable