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November 29, 2021

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

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we urge you to VOTE YES to confirm Jessica Rosenworcel as the first female permanent chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). She has nearly a decade of experience as an FCC commissioner, including nine months as acting chair, and the support of leading digital, civil rights, and education groups. Votes on this issue may be included in NEA's Report Card for the 117th Congress.

Rosenworcel has long championed the FCC's E-Rate program, which has brought connectivity to public school students, educators, and library patrons all across the country. In 2014, she supported lifting the E-Rate funding cap for the first time in a decade. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she supported creation of the E-Rate Emergency Connectivity Fund to help beat the digital divide and the specific aspect of it known as the homework gap—the inability to do schoolwork at home due to lack of internet access or devices.

Before the pandemic, many students were unable to complete online assignments, conduct internet research, apply for college and jobs, or take advantage of critical government services due to lack of connectivity. When the pandemic came and K-12 education moved online, they were shut out of virtual classrooms, forced to do their schoolwork outside fast-food restaurants, or linger in community centers until late at night to get the internet access they need to succeed in school. Nationwide, 17 million students were affected—nearly 1 in 3—a disproportionate share of whom were African American or Hispanic, from low-income households, or living in rural areas.

Failure to confirm a permanent chair before Rosenworcel's term expires at the end of the year would hamstring the FCC and undermine efforts to help America's students. The Senate has already vetted and confirmed her more than once. To continue the progress already made in ensuring all students have access to online learning, we urge you to act swiftly and confirm Jessica Rosenworcel as the permanent chair of the FCC.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association