



National
Urban League



April 19, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Civil Rights Support for Renomination of FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks

Dear President Biden,

As we enter a new era of promise and possibility with historic funding to economically empower Black communities and other communities of color, we remain focused on the ways the digital age is presently shaping our ability to thrive or be further marginalized. As your Administration has demonstrated, diversity of lived experiences and perspectives is crucial to implementing equitable and inclusive policies. Because telecommunications and technology are so central to our economic, social, and political future, those who occupy the key appointments in those policy areas are more important than ever. **As leaders of national civil rights, racial justice, and faith organizations, we strongly urge you to renominate Commissioner Geoffrey Starks to another term on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).**

Since being unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate in 2019, Commissioner Starks has been our advocate and partner inside the FCC. He has been unwavering in his fight for racial and economic justice, which has built immense trust in the communities we represent. The FCC has long played a leading role in closing the digital divide and we remain confident that Commissioner Starks will ensure Black and other underserved communities benefit from broadband and the broadband-enabled ecosystem.

The civil rights community worked diligently to advocate for the passage of the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), which among other provisions includes critical funding to help bridge the digital divide through broadband access, broadband adoption, and economic opportunities for workers and business owners. As it relates to broadband affordability in particular, the FCC is responsible for ensuring that low-income communities are aware of and can participate in the \$14.2 billion Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which is a top priority for our organizations. Commissioner Starks has been a tireless champion of ACP. In fact, he has sought new ways to extend its impact 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 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.

Further, Commissioner Starks remains a stalwart champion for equity and diversity on a range of issues, including diversifying the next generation of policy leaders through his Early Career Staff Diversity Initiative; 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. He is also a leader who works collaboratively with his fellow Commissioners and Members of Congress regardless of their political affiliation, which speaks to his spirit of diplomacy and an unyielding desire to ensure that the telecommunications and technology policies are people focused.

Commissioner Starks receives our highest level of support to remain on the FCC and we encourage you to act swiftly to renominate him to a position that is critical to the future of our communities.

Sincerely,

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

Maya Wiley
President and CEO
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Melanie L. Campbell
President and CEO
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Convener
Black Women's Roundtable

Damon Hewitt
President and Executive Director
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Rev. Al Sharpton
Founder and President
National Action Network

Dr. David J. Johns
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National Black Justice Coalition

Shavon Arline-Bradley
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National Council of Negro Women

Kim Tignor
Founder and Executive Director
Take Creative Control