

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *DataConnex, LLC*, File No: EB-IHD-15-00020296.

Abuse of the Rural Health Care program is egregious, among other reasons, because every dollar stolen through fraud is a dollar not used to bring telehealth services to rural and remote areas. So I'm pleased that we're taking aggressive action against a company that we believe sought to scam the system. We allege that DataConnex flagrantly violated competitive bidding rules, falsified documents, and manipulated rates to inflate the funding it received. This conduct deserves a stiff penalty. And if the allegations set forth in the Notice of Apparent Liability are confirmed to be accurate, one will be imposed.

As the saying goes, "Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice shame on me." Well, DataConnex is the second *Notice of Apparent Liability* we've adopted in the past year involving the Rural Health Care program. This case again highlights the need for us to review that program. Just last month, we adopted a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* to explore ways we can stop waste, fraud, and abuse. This is especially critical because the program is hitting its current funding cap.

Thank you to the staff for the excellent legwork on this case. From the Enforcement Bureau, Rizwan Chowdhry, MaryBeth Deluca, Loyaan Egal, Rosemary Harold, Keith Morgan, Rakesh Patel, David Sobotkin, and Geoffrey Starks. From the Wireline Competition Bureau, Regina Brown, Radhika Karmarkar, and Preston Wise. And from the Office of General Counsel, Jim Bird, Billy Layton, Linda Oliver, Bill Richardson, and Sally Stone.