

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510-1304

July 19, 2018

577

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I appreciate your statement earlier this week expressing “serious concerns” about the proposed merger between Sinclair Broadcast Group (Sinclair) and Tribune Media Company (Tribune) and commend the FCC on its decision to halt its review of the merger and refer the proposed merger to receive the heightened legal scrutiny it deserves. I write to again reiterate my concerns with the proposed merger and urge the FCC’s continued scrutiny.

As you are aware, I have written many times over the past few months to share my own concerns about the proposed merger and to highlight Sinclair’s worrisome business practices and the threat the deal poses to the public interest, localism and diversity, and competition. Sinclair’s record is long when it comes to pushing the interests of local and diverse audiences aside in favor of mandating local stations air Sinclair-produced national content. Sinclair has harmed local news stations and undermined the trust of local audiences by requiring local news anchors to deliver corporate-scripted messages, without a disclaimer, and in some cases reportedly while threatening employee consequences.

Sinclair has sought to exploit every available loophole to avoid complying with existing media ownership limits, including constructing purchase agreements that fail any reasonable test of a meaningful divestment. Sinclair’s recent announcement to submit yet another amended proposal serves as not only acknowledgement that their previous proposals failed to comply with the law, but also as a deliberate attempt to avoid having to defend these sham purchase agreements before a judge. As Sinclair seeks to expand its reach by millions of American homes, careful consideration must be given to Sinclair’s troubling conduct.

Again, I commend the FCC on approving the order to afford the proposed Sinclair – Tribune merger heightened legal review, and urge the FCC’s continued commitment to evaluating the merger with the upmost scrutiny.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

CC: Jessica Rosenworcel, Federal Communications Commissioner
Michael O’Rielly, Federal Communications Commissioner
Brendan Carr, Federal Communications Commissioner



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 3, 2018

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

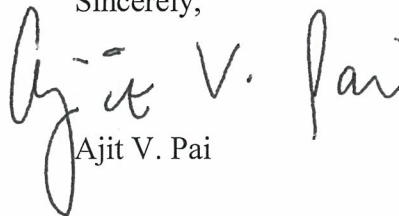
Dear Senator Durbin:

Thank you for your letter sharing your own serious concerns regarding the pending transaction between Sinclair Broadcast Group and Tribune Media Company.

The evidence the Commission received suggested that certain station divestitures that had been proposed to the FCC would have allowed Sinclair to control those stations in practice, even if not in name, in violation of the law. Accordingly, I circulated a Hearing Designation Order to my colleagues, who unanimously approved it on July 18, 2018. Given the seriousness of the issues presented, the order directs the Media Bureau to hold in abeyance all other pending applications and amendments thereto related to the overall proposed Sinclair-Tribune transaction until the issues that are the subject of this order have been resolved.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Ajit" written in a cursive-like script and the last name "Pai" in a more formal, upright script. The middle initial "V." is written in a simple, clear font between the first and last names.
Ajit V. Pai