November 2, 2017

Federal Communications Commission

445 12 Street S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Comments for MB Docket No. 17-179

Greetings,

I am writing the Commission today to urge its members to reject the transfer of control of Tribune Media Company to Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc. As Sinclair has clearly noted in its application, it now owns or operates 173 broadcast television stations consisting of 528 channels, making it the largest local news provide in the country. It probably makes good business sense for Sinclair to build market share and expand its advertising base by acquiring the 42 broadcast television that the Tribune Media Company owns, but it is difficult to see how allowing any organization, particularly one with a clear political perspective, to reach 72 percent of U.S. television households will lead to more aggressive reporting, more journalistic independence, and a diversity of viewpoints in our media.

The airwaves are owned by the public and you are our only bulwark against a monopoly providing the same conservative programming to three-quarters of the local television stations. Sinclair has dismissed criticism of its requirement that local stations carry political commentary by Mark Hyman and Boris Epshteyn by noting the small percentage of the total programming these comments represent. That completely misses the point. This merger will allow one company that has already acted in bad faith in Baltimore, its corporate headquarters and my hometown, to now force a majority of local stations around the country to support politicians and political parties, as Fox has so shamelessly done for this current administration and the Republican party. It is no coincidence that a number of Republican presidential aspirants had to resign their position as commentators on Fox.

Beyond promoting political agendas and parties, there is the even more disturbing issue of the distruction of journalistic integrity. Sinclair is clearly pursuing this merger so it can compete more effectively with Fox as the premier conservative network, which will ensure a race to the bottom in television journalism.

According to the Baltimore Sunpapers, after the September 2001 attacks, Sinclair executives ordered news anchors at its local stations to run editorials announcing support for the Bush administration's response. Despite objections from our local affiliates, WBFF and WNUV, the editorials were read. In fall 2002, Sinclair provided free helicopter trips to Robert Ehrlich, the Republican candidate, during the gubernatorial campaign worth a total of more than $34,000.

This merger is not in the interest of the American Public and I respectfully ask you to reject it.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lippy, Ph.D.