



National Hispanic
Foundation
for the Arts



NHMA
National Hispanic Medical Association



October 16, 2014

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman, The Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler and Members of the Commission,

Few issues are as important to this country's continued economic and social progress as improving access to high-speed Internet service. Those able to avail themselves of modern, high-speed technologies, especially home access, are better positioned to live fully empowered lives. This includes access to online job applications, medical care, education courses and a variety of entertainment options.

Given the Internet's increasingly vital role in so many key areas of our lives, we are pleased to submit this letter in support of the proposed merger of DirecTV and AT&T. If this merger is approved, these two companies have agreed to expand dramatically the availability of high-speed access, especially in historically underserved areas. For Latinos in particular, this is welcome news and worthy of the Commission's attention.

To appreciate our significant interest in the AT&T-DirecTV merger, the Commission should consider how Latino students are performing in school relative to their peers. [According to the U.S. Department of Education](#), Latino students on average lag roughly two grade levels behind their counterparts in reading and math exams. Their graduation rates lag in all but two states. This gap is even greater for Latino students for whom English is a second language.

Therefore, we view improving broadband Internet access for our community as vital to helping our students participate fully in education, and empowering our youth and our community to achieve their full potential. We also believe that Commissioner Rosenworcel summarized this concern well when she stated at the Latino 2.0 convention last month, "Today, roughly seven in ten teachers assign homework that requires access to broadband. But nearly one in three Americans do not subscribe to broadband services at any speed [and] for Latinos, that number is even greater with nearly half lacking access to broadband at home."

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The proposal to merge AT&T and DirecTV offers the prospect that residents from all across the country will be able to access modern web services capable of handling today's data demands. The benefits of this merger will extend beyond those who for the first time will be able to access high-speed service. The merger will also benefit those who live in areas where the only "broadband" access is through aging technology such as DSL, which are increasingly not capable of meeting consumers' online demands.

For Latinos, the deployment of high-speed web access is also crucial for improving job opportunities. [As the Commission itself has noted](#), "digital literacy is key to finding and keeping a job." Half of today's jobs require some level of technology skills, and this is expected to grow to nearly 80% in the next decade. Increasingly, many of these skills can be acquired by taking online training courses and seminars, thereby making broadband accessibility a key ingredient in improving workers' competency skills. Additionally, as the Commission's own materials have stated, more than 80% of fortune 500 companies require online job applications.

Another benefit of increased broadband access, especially in rural areas, that holds tremendous potential for our community's health and wellness is the promise of tele-medicine capabilities and how they can help transform the delivery of much needed medical diagnoses, counseling, and monitoring for those who up to now have been without such access.

It is also true that broadband access has become increasingly important to our nation's Latino entrepreneurs. A recent U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce/Mobile Future study concluded, not surprisingly, that Hispanic businesses relied more and more heavily every day on their online presence for business development, customer care, marketing and overall management of the business.

Another issue of great importance to us involves support for workplace and supplier diversity. For years, AT&T has put considerable effort into creating not only a diverse workforce, but a company whose suppliers reflect the communities and the consumers it serves. Diversity is not rhetoric to AT&T, and their commitment to leading the way has earned the company tremendous support among Latino leaders as well as some of the highest assessments among organizations who historically track these important metrics with empirical data. For example, AT&T has the highest rating on the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility's [Corporate Inclusion Index](#). As such, we look forward to seeing a merged AT&T-DirecTV that offers even greater economic, business, educational and employment opportunities for our community at the levels we have become accustomed to seeing at AT&T.

As a very budget conscious community, we are always interested to learn how mergers will affect the costs of the services being provided or affected by the combining of the two companies. In this case, the AT&T, DirecTV merger looks to provide its consumers with the ability to bundle high-speed Internet, mobile services, and video delivery services in a way that holds the potential to increase efficiencies for and decrease costs to customers.

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Finally, the merger between AT&T and DirecTV can bring about a plethora of opportunities for the combined company to offer more diverse entertainment choices by supporting the carriage of more Latino content providers, and making Latino content available to a wider audience. We look forward to working with AT&T to bring their unparalleled commitment to diversity, to the country's viewers, and to do it through all the many platforms the company will offer its consumers.

In closing, the AT&T-DirecTV merger will help expand access to 21st century broadband to many in our growing community who do not have it, but whose lives could be immensely enriched with access to it. As such, we ask you to approve the merger.

Sincerely,

Brent Wilkes, Executive Director, the League of United Latin American Citizens,
Dr. Juan Andrade, President, The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute,
Javier Palomarez, President and CEO, The United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce,
Dr. Elena Rios, President, The National Hispanic Medical Association,
Felix Sanchez, President and CEO, The National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts