

February 22, 2016

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: MB Docket No. 15-146 - *Amendment of Parts 15, 73 and 74 of the Commission's Rules to Provide for the Preservation of One Vacant Channel in the UHF Television Band For Use By White Space Devices and Wireless Microphones*

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On behalf of the organizations below, we are writing to express our concern about the Federal Communications Commission's proposal to reserve one or more television channels for unlicensed use. The proposed FCC actions will displace low power television (LPTV) stations and television translators. This, in turn, will negatively impact minorities, women and underserved communities in at least two ways. First, it will limit new opportunities for increasing diversity in broadcast ownership. Minorities and underrepresented groups seeking to enter the broadcast television ownership market will find fewer opportunities if the Commission's proposal is adopted. Second, it will significantly reduce the ability of low income and minority consumers to access the free, local broadcast television on which they rely, including in-language programming for which there are few or no available alternatives.

LPTV plays a critical role in encouraging greater diversity of ownership in the broadcast television ecosystem because it can be used as an entry point to increase broadcast ownership among minorities and women. African-Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and women are currently underrepresented in terms of broadcast ownership. Because access to capital remains a significant hurdle to increasing diversity of ownership, LPTV stations, which represent a far less costly entry point than full power stations, can serve as an effective way to promote diversity of ownership among underrepresented groups.

In 2009, the Community Broadcasters Association conducted a survey of LPTV stations titled, "Diversity Defined: A Report on the Diversity and Localism

provided by Class A and Low Power Television Stations.” The following data points are excerpts from this analysis of LPTV ownership and programming¹

Minority Owners of Low Power Television

- 45% of LPTV stations are owned or partially owned by a minority
- 43% of these stations have a minority owner of at least 51% of the station
 - 24% of LPTV owners are Hispanic
 - 10% of LPTV owners are African American
 - 3% of LPTV owners are Asian
 - 3% of LPTV owners are Native American
 - 34% of LPTV owners are multi-racial
 - 60% of LPTV stations are owned or partially owned by women

Diversity in Programming on Low Power Television

- 66% of LPTV stations offer at least some foreign-language programming
- 78% of LPTV stations that offer foreign language programming air at least 10 hours weekly of foreign language programming
- 83% of LPTV stations have local programming

The Commission has frequently stated that increasing and promoting ownership by minorities and women is an important public policy goal. The Commission has also rightly prioritized LPTV and translator stations over unlicensed operations. We therefore find it surprising that the FCC would shift its policies and priorities when minority broadcast ownership remains a vital issue. The proposed actions to displace low power television stations and television translators would restrict, and in some markets eliminate, opportunities for low-cost ownership entry for minority and women broadcasters.

These actions would also sever programming to underserved communities, including minority, ethnic and low-income viewers. The need for diversity in programming and language access – especially in low-income communities – is more critical than ever. Low power stations frequently provide in-language programming for which there is no immediate alternative. Underserved communities rely on these stations to provide in-language programming upon which they currently rely.

In [a letter submitted](#) in December, ten rural and farming organizations also expressed concerns about the proposal’s impact on translators and low power

¹ See <http://www.spectrumevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/LPTV-Industry-Survey-1.pdf>

stations. Signers of that letter included the American Agri-Women, American Farm Bureau Federation, Intertribal Agriculture Council, National Association of Farm Broadcasting, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, National Black Growers Council, National Farmers Union, Rural & Agriculture Council of America, U.S. Cattlemen's Association and Women Involved in Farm Economics.

We urge the Commission not to abandon its longstanding goal of increasing broadcast ownership by minorities and underrepresented groups. We also urge the Commission not to disenfranchise underserved viewers in low-income households who rely on in-language, over-the-air programming available to them today. Low power television stations provide both opportunity and critical programming. The Commission should not silence these voices.

Sincerely,

Black Business Association

Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund

Latino Public Broadcasting

National Association of Negro Business & Professional Women's Clubs

National Black Church Initiative

National Black Programming Consortium

National Black Religious Broadcasters

National Caucus & Center on Black Aging

The Latino Coalition

cc:

Chairman Thomas Wheeler

Commissioner Mignon Clyburn

Commissioner Michael O'Rielly

Commissioner Ajit Pai

Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel