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I enthusiastically endorse the proposed rules to "unlock the box" and allow individual consumers to purchase, rather than only rent, cable set-top boxes. The rates being charged for these clunky pieces of technology are unjustifiable. The actual capabilities of these boxes are staid and ripe for improvement and innovation.

As an example, consider electricity consumption. As an energy-conscious consumer, I plug many of my electronics, including my TV, etc., into power strips that allow me to quickly and easily eliminate any power consumption from these devices when I'm not actually using them. This includes so-called "vampire" loads - power draw from electronics that are never really off, but rather are only on standby. Although the standby power draw of television sets have mostly decreased in recent years, the standby draw of most cable set-top boxes is nearly as large as when they are in operation! However, set-top boxes have been designed - possibly specified by the cable providers - with the notion that they will always be powered and in communication with the cable provider. If they lose power, either from a power outage or if, like me, a consumer wants to eliminate vampire loads, a set-top box will require several minutes of boot-up and downloading before reaching full operation. In my mind, as an engineer, this situation of high power consumption and poor responsiveness is sheer laziness on the part of the designer. A set-top box manufacturer that sold directly to the consumer, rather than to a cable provider, would have every incentive to produce a more consumer-oriented product.

As I already mentioned, and as the Chairman mentioned in his announcement, the prices that consumers pay to rent these awful travesties of consumer electronics is exorbitant. I faced a similar situation for several years renting a cable modem from my local ISP. I later learned that I could purchase a top-of-the-line DOCSIS 3.0 modem off Amazon for the same price I was paying over the course of one year of renting. I did so, and have been enjoying the savings for several years now. A similar situation simply does not exist for set-top boxes, but I believe it should. I do not expect every cable TV customer to purchase their own box - there are still arguments in favor of renting the equipment - but consumers ought to at least have the option to purchase.

The barriers are not technological, but rather only that it threatens a substantial revenue stream for cable providers. I encourage the FCC to not be swayed by the arguments provided by the providers and their well-paid lobbyists, but rather to consider the best options for consumers.