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**Carolina Medical Association**  
*Physicians dedicated to the health of all South Carolinians*

P.O. Box 11188 • Columbia, SC 29211-1188

(803) 798-6207 • 1-800-327-1021

Fax: (803) 772-6783

www.scmanet.org

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WC DOCKET NO. 02-150

The Honorable Michael Powell  
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

The South Carolina Medical Association (SCMA) strongly recommends that the Federal Communications Commission allow BellSouth into the long distance market in South Carolina. SCMA represents approximately 7,500 physicians from 35 counties and 28 specialty medical societies in South Carolina. Two issues that our members follow are containing costs for our patients and taking advantage of advanced telecommunication services.

There is no doubt that we live in the digital and electronic age. Yet, in this age we are hampered by current regulations that prohibit BellSouth from providing long distance services. Many of our doctors are forced to select a local and a long distance provider to ensure proper telephone coverage for all of their clients. It would be more efficient in terms of cost and time if physicians could select one provider to handle all of their telecommunications needs.

Expenses associated with telecommunications equipment and services have become increasingly important to our members, as the costs of practicing medicine have dramatically increased. We believe that allowing BellSouth into the long distance market will ignite more competition in the local telecommunications market as well as in the long distance market. Additional competition will lead to lower prices and bundled services.

Doctors want bundled offerings for their local, long distance, broadband, paging, and other telecommunications services. Added competition will bring lower overall costs with package services. Reducing our costs means that we pass savings on to our patients. The medical community and their patients have much to gain when the FCC allows BellSouth into the long distance market.

Sincerely,

William Mahon  
Chief Executive Officer

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- Cc: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
- Commissioner Michael J. Copps
- Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
- Ms. Magalie Salas, Secretary of the Federal Communications Commission
- Ms. Dorothy Attwood, Chief of Common Carrier, FCC Common Carrier Bureau
- Ms. Susan Pie, Paralegal Specialist, FCC Common Carrier Bureau