

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to urge you to support the pending merger of EchoStar and HUGHES, the parent company of DIRECTV. Although I am not a DIRECTV customer (I am a Dish Network customer), I believe the merger will increase video and broadband choices for consumers like me because the combined company will provide increased competition to cable companies, as well as benefit my ability to help save lives in rural North Dakota (see below).

The combined company will be a much stronger competitor to cable operators by being able to offer me local TV channels via satellite in my market area, which I currently do not receive. I live outside of city limits by 3-4 miles, and so cable is not even offered in our area. In addition, although we are 'supposed' to be able to receive local TV via a rooftop antennae, according to our zip code, in reality we cannot, as our home is behind a hill (there aren't too many hills in North Dakota, but we happen to live behind one!). Thus, I believe the 'zip code' approach to determine who can and cannot receive network stations on their satellite systems is flawed, at best.

I currently have broadband access to the Internet, but the combination of EchoStar and HUGHES will result in increased competition in the broadband market by providing an affordable high-speed Internet service nationwide via satellite. In addition, it will allow me to have a reliable back-up system for my teleradiology system (I am a solo Radiologist in rural North Dakota. ...there is not another Radiologist for over 100 miles. As such, I am on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I have a teleradiology system that enables me to read CT scans of stroke victims and patients who have been in accidents from my home, which is a HUGE advantage as here in rural N.D., the minutes saved can and HAS meant the difference between life and death). I currently use a high-speed internet connection for this system, but it often fails, especially on the weekends, when no one is available to fix it. Having the ability to use a satellite system for the connection or as a back-up would be worth the extra money for me, not to mention the patients who are depending on me to be able to make a quick, accurate diagnosis, even though I may be nearly a hundred miles away!

I appreciate your consideration of my views. Please contact me if you have any questions...I would be happy to answer them, but as I know your time is valuable, I have tried to keep this somewhat short (you be the judge whether or not I was successful).

Sincerely,

Michael Wolf M.D.
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