

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am the Owner of Island Breeze Home Designs, and I'm writing to urge you to support the proposed merger of Hughes Electronics and EchoStar Communications. I believe the merger holds tremendous potential for my company here in Madison, AL. The new company will offer a more attractive product to consumers, and this will mean more business for my company.

None of my customers can receive their local broadcast channels via satellite. Currently, DIRECTV offers service in only 43 markets. This is a source of frustration for my customers. The proposed merger between HUGHES and EchoStar would allow the combined company to offer local broadcast channels in all 210 television markets nationwide by eliminating the duplication of identical programming carried by both services. If the merger is approved, satellite TV will be a more competitive alternative to cable, and this is good for business.

If the merger is approved, the new company will be able to provide consumers in my area an affordable high-speed Internet access service via satellite. There are a small number of customers in my area who do enjoy broadband access to the Internet via cable modem and DSL service. For them, this merger will result in increased competition in the broadband market, potentially driving down prices of DSL and cable providers. However, the majority of the homes, schools and businesses in my area are beyond the reach of cable and DSL wires. For these customers, the new company may be their only chance of getting an affordable high-speed Internet service.

My customers chose satellite TV over cable because of its superior customer service, better quality picture and sound, and the abundance of channel options. However, cable companies now offer digital cable in millions of homes. This has negated the past advantages of satellite over cable TV and has begun to hurt DIRECTV's and EchoStar's ability to compete. The new company will have the resources, spectrum and satellites necessary to offer a competitive satellite TV product while improving customer service and keeping cable prices in check.

High Definition Television (HDTV) was supposed to be available to the American public today, but consumers are still waiting for broadcasters and cable operators to provide the service. HUGHES and EchoStar have pledged to use some of the spectrum made available by their merger to increase their HDTV channel offerings, to at least twelve HDTV channels. I am excited because greater availability of HDTV programming will translate into more choices for customers and much greater signal quality.

The new company will offer many benefits to customers, but the most important one is local broadcast channels via satellite in all U.S. television markets. This is the one service most sought after by my customers. I urge you to support the proposed merger between HUGHES and EchoStar because local channels

for all Americans is only possible if the companies are allowed to combine.
This is the only way in which a true competitive market can be maintained and
release the consumer from the strong hold of the 'local' cable companies.

Sincerely,

Joe Sanford
148 Tidewater Dr
Madison, AL 35758