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FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM

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FCC Mail Room

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March 9, 2009

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: CSR-8126, ACM *et al*, MB Docket No. 09-13

Dear Ms. Dortch,

I am writing on behalf of Families For Freedom (FFF) to urge the FCC to grant this Petition to protect public, education and government (PEG) Access, the local, noncommercial channels that are expressly devoted to serving the public.

Families for Freedom is a multi-ethnic defense network by and for immigrants facing deportation, and an organizing support center for targeted communities. Families for Freedom members are all current and former detainees, loved ones of people being deported or individuals at-risk of deportation. We are primarily low-income immigrants from the Caribbean, Latin America, and South Asia.

In Manhattan, FFF uses Manhattan Neighborhood network as an important means to reach viewers in need of our services. This petition details ways in which a national cable provider, AT&T's U-Verse system, places PEG channels at a disadvantage with inferior technology in comparison to other channels on its system. This discrimination against local, non-profit media providers hurts local democracy and the First Amendment. It's also contrary to what Congress intended in passing the 1984 Cable Act. For too many grassroots organizations, this will mean losing the connection with local viewers that enables groups to extend services to the community via television.

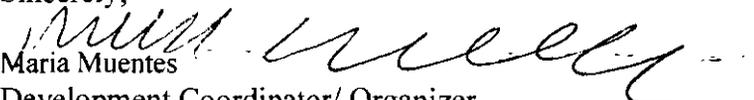
Community programming needs to be easily accessible to viewers, not placed in an inferior format that viewers will have difficulty finding and using. Fair policies and regulations must prevent discriminatory practices like this, particularly given the vast resources and capabilities of large companies like AT&T. Community Based Organizations like our own are routinely left out of for profit media. Public Access grants us the ability to make our own media which is much different from having our story told by others.

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When it comes to mainstream TV and the virulent messaging from the likes of Lou Dobbs, Bill O'Reilly et al, the marginalization of immigrants is almost complete. Issues of equal rights, due process, family separation and free speech seem to be left on the newsroom floor. The voice of the immigrant can hardly be heard while the face is rarely seen in its fullness. It is to alternative media, namely public access television outlets such as MNN that most immigrants and their allies must look to and use in order to hear and to get our true stories out.

We urge you to act in the public interest by decisively granting this petition.

Sincerely,


Maria Muentes
Development Coordinator/ Organizer

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