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THE RECORDING ACADEMY®

May 7, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

On behalf of The Recording Academy, I am pleased to see that the agenda for the FCC Open Meeting on May 15, 2014, includes the consideration of a Report and Order that provides a limited expansion to the class of wireless microphone users eligible for a license. Our members have been engaged in this subject for the past several years and are keenly interested in the Commission's determinations next week.

Internationally known for the GRAMMY Awards, The Recording Academy is the trade organization representing recording artists, songwriters, studio musicians, producers, engineers and other music professionals. Live performance and studio recording, in venues across the country, are critical activities for our members in which wireless microphones, in-ear monitors, and intercoms are vital tools of the production environment. While relying on wireless equipment at an annually increasing rate to elevate the impact and quality of both live and recorded performances, the industry has endured a drastic reduction in the available spectrum for its operation.

The 700 MHz Band auction and TV White Space proceeding significantly impacted wireless microphone operators supporting music performances, both on tours and in venues. The TV White Space rules established geo-location databases to protect the limited number of remaining UHF channels for wireless microphone operation during important performances. However, without eligibility for licenses, a majority of music productions are not able to take full advantage of this protection.

The Report and Order addressing the Incentive Auction of further UHF spectrum, also on the May 15 agenda, will put additional constraints on wireless microphone operations in the United States and make licensing critical. In order to ensure a minimum level of production continuity for professional music performances, we urge the Commission to expand wireless microphone license eligibility to include venue owners and venue operators, event producers, responsible engineers (e.g., sound engineers), performers, and professional sound equipment providers (e.g., audio rental houses).

Additionally, we urge the Commission to avoid making eligibility determinations based on metrics such as venue size or number of microphones deployed. Performances heard by millions can frequently rely on just a few microphones, and in today's dynamic content creation and distribution environment, a small venue can host a performance seen and heard around the world.

Since 1957, The Recording Academy has been the voice of the professional music industry – a treasured asset of the U.S. economy and culture. Wireless microphones and related equipment have played a indispensable role in the delivery of this art form to the world. It is my sincere hope that the Commission will recognize the value of this industry in its consideration of the license eligibility expansion issue on May 15.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neil Portnow", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Neil Portnow
President and CEO