

September 3, 2013

The Honorable Acting Chairwoman Mignon L. Clyburn
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20054

The Honorable Dr. Margaret A. Hamburg, Commissioner
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Acting Chairwoman Clyburn and Commissioner Hamburg:

As not-for-profit organizations deeply concerned about protection of public health and the environment, we urge the Federal Communications Commission to strengthen its cell phone radiation standards.

In 1996, when the FCC set its first standards, cell phone use by children was rare, smart phones did not exist, cell phone cases were virtually unheard of, and the FCC assumed that people would often carry their phones in holsters clipped to their belts.

Things have changed. Today, there are 10 times as many cell phone subscribers in the U.S. as there were in 1997. Fully 78 percent of teenagers own a cell phone. Smartphones and cell phone cases are ubiquitous, while holsters are rarely seen. More than a third of all U.S. homes are wireless-only households.

As use of electronic devices has grown, concern about potential serious long-term health effects of cell phone radiation has risen sharply. There are now numerous scientific studies showing potential links between cell phone radiation and cancer, declines in sperm count and other health problems. While more research and evidence is needed, we know enough to act protectively and proactively. Caring for our children – for future generations – is common sense.

For these reasons, we urge the FCC to modernize its regulations in the following respects:

- **Provide adequate protection for children's health.** Scientific evidence has shown that children's brains absorb more radiofrequency (RF) energy than adult brains due to their smaller head size, thinner skulls and different tissue composition. The FCC's standards, however, do not account for the special vulnerability of children nor their higher level of exposure. It is imperative that the FCC update its standards explicitly to account for and protect children.
- **Reflect actual current use patterns.** The Government Accountability Office has concluded that people who hold their phones directly against the body could receive more radiation than the FCC limit because of flaws in the agency's testing guidelines. These flaws must be fixed so that the FCC regulations reflect how people actually use their phones – not in a holster, and sometimes held directly against the body. Similarly, the agency's standards should be updated to account for the use of cell phone cases because these cases can significantly affect a phone's radiation profile but are not addressed by the FCC's current regulations.

- **Provide meaningful consumer disclosure.** By its own admission, the FCC does not provide consumers with sufficient information about the RF exposure profiles of individual phones to enable consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. The Specific Absorption Rate, the only metric of RF exposure available to consumers, is not an accurate predictor of actual exposure. It is imperative that the FCC develop a more reliable exposure metric and require this information to be disclosed in cell phone manuals and on Internet websites and clearly displayed at the point of sale. Because it is now clear that cell phone network technologies affect RF exposure as much as the design of the phones themselves, the agency's exposure metric should incorporate both parameters. Any federally mandated consumer disclosure should not pre-empt states or municipalities from requiring additional disclosure.

Just as importantly, it is critical that the FCC not weaken its existing standards by altering its testing guidelines to average radiation exposure testing over a larger volume of tissue. This change, proposed by the FCC, would be a step backward, given the unanswered questions about the potential long-term effects of cell phone radiation exposure. Because of the widespread use of wireless technology, a miscalculation could have potentially severe consequences.

Sincerely,

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