

Media Committee for Media Access

Media

ouraccess.blogspot.com

August 4, 2014

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

Re: Comcast/TWC/Charter docket MB DN 14-57

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

The Committee for Media Access is a group of Chicago residents and nonprofits working together to advocate for strong public benefits as part of Chicago's local cable franchise process and to seek protections for public, educational and government access ("PEG access") at the state and federal levels.

We are alarmed at the lack of protective language for PEG Access in Comcast's Time Warner merger proposal. Cable companies such as Comcast and Time Warner have profited immensely through the use of public rights-of-way, and support for PEG Access facilities and operations is a small price to pay in exchange for that use.

PEG Access centers protect people's right to speak and be heard, help build technological literacy in the community, involve a diversity of people, train people to adapt to a changing multi-media environment and teach skills toward independent use of media. At a time when there are more channels than ever, few commercial stations have local, diverse content. At the same time, CAN TV, Chicago's public access facility, has hundreds of hours of new local programming every month created by local residents, churches and education, health, housing, legal and arts groups.

But in many communities, Comcast and other companies are leaving the public behind by preventing public access channels from getting HD carriage, leaving public channels off of programs guides, depriving PEG stations of funding, and ultimately participating in the closure of this unique avenue for public expression and inclusion.

The Comcast/Time Warner merger bid will transfer the New York City PEG access agreements to Comcast. Those agreements are worthy of the FCC's attention since New York City made sure its public access channels and operations were supported, and that Time Warner provided technological equivalency to the public channels as compared to broadcast channels.

To protect public access channels throughout the country in communities that Comcast serves, we strongly recommend that you require Comcast to meet these three conditions for approval of its merger with Time Warner:

1. Direct and unrestricted funding to preserve the independence of local public access television channels and services.
2. Funding and capacity agreements that allow for local public access television channels to grow and evolve as cable grows and evolves.

3. Technological equality for local public access television channels to keep the public's channels equivalent to broadcast channels in signal quality, functionality, and accessibility.

As FCC Chairman, your leadership on this issue is critical to traditionally underrepresented groups that rely on local and accessible media outlets like CAN TV to connect with their communities, and tell the stories that aren't being told by commercial stations. Requiring Comcast to meet these public standards is an important step in making sure its merger will be in line with the FCC's goals of encouraging a diversity of information sources and ensuring that cable systems are responsive to local needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



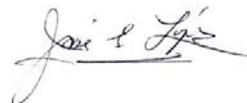
Reverend Marshall Hatch
New Mt. Pilgrim MB Church
& LEADER's Network



Gordon Quinn
Founder and Artistic Director
Kartemquin Films



Lester Fortier
President,
Toys for Tots Chicagoland
Motorcycle Parade



José E. Lopéz
Executive Director,
Puerto Rican Cultural Center



Matthew Brandon
Secretary/Treasurer, SEIU
Local 73



Phyllis Logan
NAACP-Chicago Westside
Chapter



Reverend Walter Jones
Executive Director,
Fathers Who Care



Carol L. Adams, PhD
President and CEO
DuSable Museum of African
American History



Alejandro Molina
Secretary, Board of Directors,
Puerto Rican Cultural Center



Robbie Smith
Producer,
Having Your Say



Jake Austen
Producer,
Chic-a-go-go



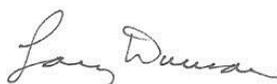
Cecilia Butler
Washington Park Advisory
Council



Gwendolyn Chubb,
JustUs for Justice Ministry



Frank Latin
Executive Director
Westside Writing Project



Larry Duncan
Committee for Labor Access



Jeff McCarter
Founder & Executive Director,
Free Spirit Media



William Brown
Producer,
Senior Network



Carole Herhold
Committee for Media Access



Scott Sanders
Co-Founder
Chicago Media Action



Dave Kraft
Nuclear Energy Information
Service

(CONTINUED...)

Wanda Avila

Wanda Avila
Founder & Executive Director
La Familia Unida

Bill Wildt

Bill Wildt
Motorsports Unlimited

Grady Davis

Grady Davis
Member,
Tuskegee Airmen

Denise Zaccardi

Denise Zaccardi
Co-Chair,
Chicago Youth Voices Network