



October 8, 2015

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

The television members of the Massachusetts Broadcasters Association respectfully express our concern with your proposal to eliminate network non-duplication and syndicated exclusivity rules, which are essential to continuing to offer high-quality, local broadcasting in Massachusetts. Eliminating these rules will also increase unnecessary transaction and litigation costs and lead to more frequent and protracted retransmission consent interruptions. Therefore, we ask that you reconsider this proposal.

The notion that these rules are outdated is flawed. Ever since the rules were implemented, cable and satellite dominance of the video distribution model has only grown exponentially. Eliminating these rules would give cable operators, which can acquire below market rates for distant signals, *added* incentive to undermine local broadcast stations that are both their supplier and competitor.

Additionally, the belief that exclusivity protections can be worked out contractually - under new rules - is a major cause for concern for local broadcast stations. Disputes over exclusivity would lead to expensive court cases causing harm to both parties, as well as television viewers throughout the country. Even arbitration, for both parties, would be expensive and lengthy, as a residual impact of any change. The current system for non-duplication and syndication exclusivity rules provides a proven means of enforcement of these free-market negotiations and agreements.

We ask you and the Commission to instead place localism as a more important goal. Our television stations pay for exclusivity, building the local connections and resulting revenue which allows us to provide more *local* news, sports, weather and information to our viewers. Local advertising clients, America's commerce drivers, in every US TV market, prefer a local station, serving a local audience at local prices. In addition, emergency information like weather alerts, traffic congestion and police emergencies would be greatly affected by importing distant signals. What video sources would be left to provide this vital information? Who would best serve as television's first responders in the local communities we serve? Certainly a station from Albany, Hartford or Portland, for example, could not help those in Boston or Springfield.

There are a number of recent examples where having a *local* news presence was critical. In 2011, a number of tornadoes ripped through Western Massachusetts. While, tragically, three lives were lost, the immediate coverage by local stations prevented a greater loss of life.

On April 15, 2013, two bombs exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon. The people of Massachusetts and the nation were able to tune in to local television coverage - within minutes - and stations ran nearly constant coverage through the week until apprehension of the suspect. This "home team" advantage, exemplified by local reporters who know the streets, cities, towns and local

authorities, provides coverage that no other outlet can. The service we provide is what every local community wants and more importantly, what every local community needs.

Among countless examples, we offer one more. In the winter of 2014-2015, New England and particularly Massachusetts, was deluged by a record amount of snowfall. Our stations were on the ground each and every day reporting on weather, road conditions, available shelters, sources of aid and disseminating constant important information from local authorities. Preserving the rights for local broadcasters, of network non-duplication and syndicated exclusivity, will allow us to continue do what we do best: serve our viewers.

We thank you for your consideration of our viewpoint, reconsidering your own. It is vital to protect the best delivery system of local information and the most trusted source available to the Commonwealth's citizens. We are confident that maintaining exclusivity rules will allow all local broadcasters to continue to provide high-quality local programming that the viewers of Massachusetts have come to expect.

Sincerely,

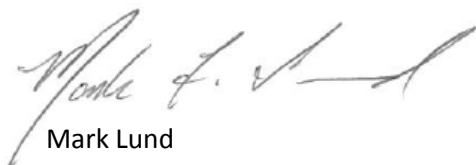
Jordan Walton
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Bill Fine
President and General Manager
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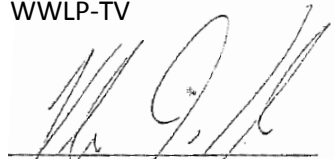
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Cc: Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner Ajit Pai, Commissioner Michael O'Rielly