

BRIAN HIGGINS
27TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM
AND INTELLIGENCE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE
MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,
NONPROLIFERATION AND TRADE

REVITALIZING OLDER CITIES
TASK FORCE
CO-CHAIR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3227

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March 12, 2012

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Chairman Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Chairman Genachowski,

I write to express my concerns with the recent partnership proposal between CellCo Partnership and Verizon Wireless. I would like to associate my comments with others in reference to Docket number 12-4 that the FCC is currently receiving public comments on. This merger represents an exciting opportunity to expand the Verizon FiOS network while creating new jobs and opportunities for great broadband access and cable coverage. My concern is that the benefits and opportunities are maximized for the residents of my district in the City of Buffalo.

Buffalo is the second largest city in New York and represents a dynamic economy that is integral to cross border trade with Canada. Despite having a thriving medical research community, a vibrant banking sector, and a strong manufacturing base, broadband and cable infrastructure has lagged in certain parts of the City of Buffalo. Verizon specifically has expanded its FiOS network to ten suburbs of the Buffalo area but has not built into our urban neighborhoods. This situation has created an unbalanced market for cable and broadband services in the City of Buffalo with little competition.

A merger between CellCo and Verizon could continue this trend rather than alleviate concerns. Verizon might have little incentive to compete with its new partner by building a vibrant FiOS network in the City of Buffalo. Lack of competition drives up prices and reduces the quality of service making it more and more difficult to take advantage of broadband and cable services.

The Internet has become a driving force in economic empowerment. It has provided services to small businesses, schools, hospitals and manufactures that have allowed them to succeed in an increasingly competitive global market. Broadband networks like Verizon FiOS provide high speed access to education tools, data, and market research necessary for all communities to diversify their economics and fit in to a global economy. It follows that denial of these services or monopolies on access create a situation that harms those communities that bear the brunt of limited competition.

Increased competition and access to these essential services should be promoted by our federal, state and local policies. When the private market places barriers to access or competition fails to produce outcomes that serve the greatest number of people we can only conclude that steps must be taken to alleviate those impediments. I ask that you thoroughly examine the potential impact of this merger on competition in the City of Buffalo while taking into account access to communities that are currently underserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "BRIAN HIGGINS". The signature is stylized and cursive.

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress