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Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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FCC Mail Room

MB Consumer Broadcast Audio Service

September 2, 2015

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

AM radio is the most diverse communications service in America. With relatively low barriers to entry, there are more minority-owned AM stations than any other outlet, including in top-ranked markets where audiences and advertising revenues are greatest.

The content of AM radio is similarly diverse. In addition to music, news and sports, AM radio is a primary source for cultural and in-language programming. As a result, AM radio is a crucial outlet for African American listeners to access the information and entertainment that is most relevant to their communities.

Unfortunately, AM radio stations face certain economic and technical challenges that are causing some listeners to migrate to newer, higher fidelity alternatives. In particular, a troubling number of minority-owned and other stations that lack access to capital have been forced to shut down or sell out, posing risks to radio diversity.

The FCC has tools at its disposal to enhance the AM radio experience, and we are heartened to learn that you are finally advancing the FCC's proceeding to revitalize AM radio service. However, it has come to our attention that you may reverse course on the most promising mechanism proposed therein: an application window for FM translators that is limited to AM licensees. Inclusion of this AM-only application window is essential to provide meaningful relief for AM radio.

The clearer signal reception and extended hours enabled by translators have allowed some minority-owned AM stations to attract more listeners and advertisers and improve their economic stability. But, as the FCC has recognized, translators are a scare commodity in many areas, blocking many AM broadcasters from obtaining a translator, or forcing them to participate in bidding wars that favor more powerful, well-funded stations. Too many minority-owned broadcasters lack the financial resources to purchase a translator, which means that listeners to these stations often receive lower quality service and programming than other audiences. Opening this process increases the opportunity for minority participation and supports minority stations in their efforts to broadcast.

An AM-only application window for new FM translators would provide every AM radio broadcaster an equal opportunity to obtain a translator. Such an approach would also allow AM broadcasters to use their limited resources to improve service for listeners, leading to more

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economically viable minority-owned AM radio stations, a more diverse broadcasting ecosystem, and more attractive options for urban, Hispanic, and in-language audiences.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the FCC promptly open an application window for FM translators that are limited to AM radio licensees.

Sincerely,

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Hakeem S. Jeffries
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Marcia Fudge
Member of Congress