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The Honorable Michael K. Powell  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 – 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20544

**Re: EchoStar/Hughes Electronics merger, FCC Docket # 01-348**

Dear Commissioner Powell:

Typically, one's instinctive response to a corporate merger is to wonder about its effect on the competitive environment. I'm sure that's how most people would react to the news that EchoStar Communications Corp. (the DISH Network) wanted to merge with Hughes Electronics Corp. (DIRECTV).

In this case, though, the merger that is pending before the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Justice will serve to strengthen competition, in both the television and high-speed Internet access markets. By freeing up spectrum that the two companies currently use for duplicative programs, the merged EchoStar will be able to greatly expand Direct Broadcast Satellite services – thus competing more effectively with the cable companies that currently control some 80% of the pay TV market.

That point about increased spectrum may seem technical, but here's the real-world meaning of it: Without the merger, the DISH Network and DIRECTV can carry local channels in a total of about 40 markets. With the merger, the new company will be able to carry local channels in some 100 markets. Now that's a consumer benefit any TV viewer can appreciate!

This merger also has important benefits for those who use broadband, high-speed Internet access – and for those who would like to have such access, but because they live or work in rural areas, can only have it if a cable company is willing to install miles of expensive cable to the customer's home or business.

Because of their government franchises, cable companies have been able to maintain a virtual monopoly on pay TV, not to mention holding a sizable share of the high-speed Internet market. By making it possible for EchoStar to expand and improve its Direct Broadcast Satellite services, this merger will provide genuine competition in the television and Internet markets. I hope you will support it.

Yours truly,

D.P. Breckenridge