

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to you today as a current satellite TV subscriber who would like to add my voice of support to the pending merger of EchoStar and DIRECTV. I think that the merger will create a stronger satellite company, which in turn creates a stronger competitor to the huge cable and telco monopolies and their poor service. It would provide more choices for satellite equipment to be used, more channels to customers, and more pressure for local cable companies to lower their rates and improve their service.

I have been a Dish Network subscriber since the getgo. I first subscribed in rural Ohio (Oxford), where our 'local' cable company, Time Warner Cable, had ignored our community since they had purchased the cable system. We were still running on a 35 channel system, with two of those channels BLANK, two with home shopping, one with the TVGuide channel, and we were saddled with both Cincinnati AND Dayton local networks (all of them with poor reception). The combined effect of this was that we were only given rudimentary basic cable (no Cartoon Network, Comedy Central, VH1, ESPN2, Turner Classic Movies, and many others) and only two movie channel options, along with ONE PPV. For this service, we paid over \$50 a month in 1996.

It was a no brainer to switch to Dish, where at the time nearly 100 channels were offered, with far better picture, and no outages, except when it would hail outside (compared with weekly cable outages). Service was under \$40, and installation was only \$100.

Since that time, I have moved to the Los Angeles hills, and I brought my Dish receivers with me. Dish provided FREE replacement 18 inch dishes, and made the transition simple, with no disruption of service.

Over the nearly six years of my being a customer, Dish has done everything to improve their service, from adding more basic channels (for FREE), more extended tier channels, and many more PPV and Movie channel options. They have added local networks (recently up to 20 in LA), HD broadcasts, Dolby Digital sound, TiVO style receivers, etc. All with minimal increases in cost.

I currently pay \$74 a month for my service, including 150 channels + local channels + 7 HBOs, a showtime package, and a Starz pack + 4 HD channels. The LESS than equivalent service from nearly bankrupt Adelphia costs over \$100, and getting them to even ADMIT to a price without signing a contract is a chore in and of itself. Dish always makes pricing clear, with no bait and switch, three month hook-in rates, and other shady tactics.

On top of this, as a Dish subscriber, I am aware of who our CEO is, how he feels, etc. He holds monthly discussions on the air to answer questions and receive feedback. He is always out there telling us how he feels, what he is doing for us, and how to help OR tell him what we don't like. He might be a thorn in the side of some people, but Charlie Ergen is like the 'pop' in a mom and pop satellite company, and it is amazing to see that in this day and age, there are still CEOs out there that understand how important the customer is, and that they are working for us.

And that is why I believe him when he promises that by merging, the combined company will be a much stronger competitor to cable television and can offer more programming choices and, most importantly, all local TV channels in every market in the U.S. He has done nothing to make me doubt him. I cannot say the same thing about the phone and cable companies who oppose this merger.

People all over the country will be able to benefit from the kind of service and options I have here in LA. For too long, the cable industry has ignored rural customers due to cost, lack of competition, and apathy. A strong satellite company that can serve these people is a must.

By providing local TV channels everywhere, this merger will make satellite television a strong alternative to cable in my LA community, and my former community in Ohio. Throughout the country

Sincerely,

Michael Kramer
2506 Almaden Court
Los Angeles, CA 90077