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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1009

November 5, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I write to you in strong support of the satellite market modification petitions submitted by Franklin, Hart, Stephens, and Elbert counties (the “counties”) seeking coverage of in-state broadcasting from Atlanta-based stations. I am encouraged that the Media Bureau has approved the petitions submitted by all four counties. Furthermore, I am glad to hear that no appeal was filed period against the Media Bureau’s approval on June 7, 2019 of Elbert County’s market modification petition, and that the county is now ready to receive broadcasting from Atlanta-based stations pending successful negotiation between the broadcasters and satellite companies. This is the culmination of years of work by the counties in support of their residents’ need for access to in-state television programming for news, weather, and sports.

Residents of the four Northeast Georgia counties who subscribe to satellite television currently receive local programming from broadcasting stations in the Asheville, North Carolina and Greenville, South Carolina media markets. As a result, residents are deprived of the range of critical information that in-state broadcasters provide to their communities. Since weather patterns in this region generally move from west to east, residents depend on public safety messages that come through in-state broadcasters. Thus, the provision of local broadcasting options represents a matter of public safety as well as an important cultural and economic link between these counties and the rest of Georgia.

This progress by the counties comes after years of effort in the legislative and executive branches of our government as well as at the state level. Members of Georgia’s congressional delegation worked together with colleagues and stakeholders to develop a viable solution that was ultimately included in the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Reauthorization (STELAR) Act of 2014. The Commission’s promulgation of final rulemaking in September of 2015 and the issuance of the first market modification orders in early 2017—pursuant to the STELAR Act—has given hope that residents in Northeast Georgia will finally have access to the local broadcasting they so urgently need.

Although media stations in South Carolina filed an appeal against the Media Bureau’s approval of the Franklin, Hart, and Stephens County petitions, no appeal was filed after the Media

Bureau's approval of the Elbert County petition. Applications for review have been filed by South Carolina stations against the Media Bureau's approval of Franklin County on October 12, 2018, Hart County on November 13, 2018, and Stephens County on May 6, 2019. With these three counties still in need of a final decision, I encourage the Commission to work with all affected stakeholders to quickly complete consideration of their satellite market modification petitions.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Collins". The signature is stylized, with a large "D" and "C" and a vertical line separating them.

Doug Collins
Ninth Congressional District of Georgia