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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE INTERNET
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Stearns, and members of the Subcommittee. It is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today alongside my esteemed colleagues to discuss our work at the Commission. As the agency responsible for regulating the telecommunications industry, the FCC has an important role to play in our nation's economic recovery and sustained health. From what I have witnessed in my short time at the Commission, I can assure you that we are an agency fully committed to the task at hand.

I have spent my first six weeks at the Commission listening to and learning from the staff about the wide range of issues under the Commission's jurisdiction. What has stood out most prominently during this time is our staff's enthusiasm, passion, and dedication. We have been endowed with a terrific and talented group of experts covering each aspect of the telecommunications world, and they are unwavering in their commitment to serve the American people. I appreciate and will rely upon their expertise and counsel as we navigate through the many complex communications issues in the days ahead.

My colleagues have already touched on a number of important matters facing the Commission – each crucial to the success of the agency. I want to supplement their list

by addressing just a few additional issues on which I expect to focus considerable time and effort.

First, I believe strongly that we must refocus this agency on consumers. While we have one bureau formally dedicated to consumer interests, each of our bureaus and offices, as well as each of us individually, must constantly be mindful of the impact our decisions have on consumers. In my view, this is not a passive exercise. Rather, we must be vigilant in asking ourselves how each of our decisions impact the marketplace. So, where the market is working effectively and consumers are reaping the benefits, we can take a step back and watch it flourish. Where it is failing, however, our responsibility is to craft reasonable and appropriate measures to get it back on track.

A good example of our renewed focus on consumers is the recent notice of inquiry we issued under the leadership of Chairman Genachowski concerning the information disclosed throughout the telecommunications purchasing process. Over the last several years, the Commission has received thousands of complaints from consumers who are confused about everything from how to compare service plans among providers to how to discern exactly what they are paying for when they receive their bills. Due in part to the rapid development and convergence of telecommunications technologies, many consumers are left scratching their heads when attempting to compare and manage their telecommunications plans and services.

There is no more essential component in the purchasing process than clear, accurate, and useful information. That applies across the board. Without these things, consumers enter into contracts they never anticipated, pay for services they never sought,

and spend far more than they should for the services they receive. When this happens, the market has failed, and a closer look is warranted.

This particular issue presents us with a fantastic opportunity. As the notice of inquiry suggests, the Commission will be working hand-in-hand with consumers, public interest organizations, industry, and academics to better understand what kinds of confusion exist and the best ways in which to address the problem. The Commission will rely on a broad range of input to develop the least imposing yet most effective measures necessary to ensure a robust and fair marketplace.

Moreover, as part of redoubling our consumer efforts, I believe we must also increase both our accessibility and transparency to the public. While there is no shortage of good ideas in Washington, the answers to all of our questions cannot be found solely within a 30-mile radius of this fine city. By fostering greater consumer participation and awareness, we undoubtedly will yield superior results. This means making the Commission far more accessible to the general public through our website and other new media tools as well as finding innovative ways to open our doors beyond the Beltway. For example, I am pleased that the Commission has already taken a number of steps to increase public participation through the use of new media, such as utilizing IdeaScale, a crowd-sourcing program, as well as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. These are just some of the ways we will increase public participation and allow for an open and transparent dialogue.

I also wanted to touch on one of the most pressing issues before the Commission, the National Broadband Plan. My fellow Commissioners and our Chairman have already

addressed a number of important concerns. I want to contribute briefly to this discussion by reviewing the significant implications of broadband on energy and healthcare.

While much of the focus over the next several months inevitably will be on the core elements of broadband deployment and adoption, it is also essential that the Commission's National Broadband Plan account for national priorities beyond the traditional communications realm. Congress itself understood this necessity when crafting the Recovery Act, assigning to us the mission of creating a roadmap that recognized broadband's power to transform a vast array of public and private services.

Two such areas about which the members of this committee are intimately familiar are energy and healthcare. When it comes to thinking about the intersection between broadband and energy policy, the conversation begins with the Smart Grid. Smart Grid technology is designed to make our electrical grid more resilient and intelligent. If we take seriously the notions of energy independence and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, we must develop a grid capable of accommodating renewable power as a significant portion of our energy generation mix. Our broadband plan must account for the continued development and growth of this technology.

Broadband policy also has the potential to transform the way healthcare is delivered in this country. Coming from South Carolina, a state with a significant rural population and where the demand for healthcare providers sometimes exceeds supply, I am well acquainted with the need for robust telehealth programs. In order to develop a useful plan that incorporates innovative mechanisms for providing quality healthcare, we first must understand the industry's infrastructure requirements, the current reasons for inadequate access and adoption, and ways in which we can facilitate efficient, effective,

and secure on-line access to medical records. In addition, the Commission can study the information gained from our experience with the Rural Health Care Pilot Program.

In bringing these and other sectors of the economy into the fold, coordination among a variety of federal agencies and state entities is paramount. We are off to a good start, and I will do everything in my power to ensure that we continue to work effectively with all stakeholders.

The final issue I wanted to address this morning is the unfortunate state of minority media ownership in the broadcasting industry. Despite making up nearly 35 percent of the U.S. population, people of color own approximately 3% of all local TV stations and 8% of all local radio stations. And while women comprise 51% of the entire U.S. population, women own only about 5% of full power broadcast stations. These numbers are shamefully low. Not only has the situation not improved, it has gotten steadily worse.

We can all agree that these numbers reflect a problem in the marketplace. But before we jump to conclusions about how to address these symptoms, we need to have an accurate diagnosis. And to do that, we need credible, reliable, and complete data. We do not have that now, and in my view, we need to get the ball rolling as soon as possible to come to terms with exactly why our broadcast industry is in the state we find it today.

For example, we must better understand issues concerning access to capital and any systematic barriers to entry in the broadcasting industry for women and minorities. By answering these and other questions, we can finally begin to address a problem that has been languishing before the Commission.

I look forward to working with my colleagues, the FCC staff, and this Committee to develop a robust and reliable study of this issue in the very near future. I do not believe we can sit idly by and let another year pass without making significant progress on this issue.

In closing, I would like to say how excited I am to be here working along with my fellow Commissioners, Chairman Genachowski and the Subcommittee as we develop the most effective telecommunications policies possible. The American people are relying on all of us to work cooperatively to ensure that they are being provided the widest array of services at the highest quality and best prices. To do this, we must balance a number of essential factors and always be mindful of the inherent challenges of regulation.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.