

United States Senate 174

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 3, 2016

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING, HOUSING,
AND URBAN AFFAIRS
BUDGET
ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Received & Inspected
MAR 08 2016
FCC Mail Room

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

Dear Attorney General Lynch and Chairman Wheeler:

I write to request that the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) take a careful look at the proposed acquisitions of Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks by Charter Communications. I am particularly interested in whether this consolidation in the industry will negatively impact access to broadband, raise prices, or limit innovation.

The shrinking number of operators could limit access to necessary broadband services. With this potential deal, the newly merged company could be incentivized to close off new online video competitors, further limiting options for consumers. The company would also enjoy increased bargaining power when negotiating video programming fees, which could allow it to underprice smaller cable companies and new entrant video services, potentially threatening their ability to compete and limiting the delivery of broadband service to rural America.

The amount of debt that Charter will be undertaking also raises questions about its ability to follow through on its commitments to improving its network, particularly in rural areas, which is a priority for my state. The DOJ and the FCC should carefully examine whether the financial condition of the new company would allow for those investments, and whether its debt levels will lead to higher costs for consumers.

For the United States to remain a leader in innovative technologies and cutting edge ideas, broadband access must be competitive, affordable, and accessible to all. I ask that DOJ and the FCC thoroughly consider whether a Charter-Time Warner Cable-Bright House Networks deal will serve the public interest and leave consumers better off than they are today.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Received & Inspected
MAR 08 2016
FCC Mail Room