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United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1304

April 16, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

I am concerned following recent and disturbing reports that Sinclair Broadcast Group (Sinclair) required local news anchors at Sinclair-owned television stations across the country to deliver a scripted promotional message on-air. If approved, the proposed merger between Sinclair and Tribune Media Company (Tribune) would allow the combined company to influence programming reaching 72 percent of households nationwide. In making its determination whether the proposed merger serves the public interest, I urge the FCC to carefully consider Sinclair's conduct and the significant harm it poses to local news organizations and the diverse interests of the viewers that they serve.

While recent reports served as a stark example, this is not the first time Sinclair has required local news anchors to deliver corporate-scripted messages, in some cases, reportedly while under the threat of employment consequences. Further, Sinclair's troubling history of mandating content does not end with Sinclair-owned stations. By constructing purchase agreements that allow it to remotely control stations, Sinclair has been able to exploit media ownership limit loopholes to dictate content to divested stations. Of special concern, Sinclair already has announced such a purchase agreement for WGN-TV Chicago as part of its proposed merger with Tribune.

The interests of local audiences cannot help but be harmed when their trusted local reporters are required to deliver corporate-scripted messages—at times without providing a disclaimer of their source—or forgo covering salient local news to deliver mandated national content. Unfortunately, this is Sinclair's record.

In making its determination whether the proposed merger to allow a single company to reach 72 percent of U.S. television households serves the public interest, I urge the FCC to carefully consider Sinclair's conduct and the significant harm it poses.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

CC: Mignon Clyburn, Federal Communications Commissioner
Jessica Rosenworcel, Federal Communications Commissioner
Michael O'Rielly, Federal Communications Commissioner
Brendan Carr, Federal Communications Commissioner