



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON DC

Mike O'Rielly
Commissioner

March 11, 2020

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
2000 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Quigley:

Thank you for your service to the American people, and especially to your Illinois constituents. As always, but particularly given the challenging times facing our nation, it is critical to carefully consider the operations of each federal department and agency. Accordingly, the Subcommittee will today be reviewing the budget request of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or the Commission). As part of this effort, I would humbly encourage the Subcommittee to give all due consideration to the pressing need to combat pirate radio operations and the significant work it will take to implement the recently enacted Preventing Illegal Radio Abuse Through Enforcement Act (PIRATE Act).

Pirate radio is an extremely harmful practice that involves unauthorized individuals illegally broadcasting radio programming over the air, using channels that are either already occupied or located nearby existing licensed channels within the radio band. The interference caused by these "stations" is detrimental to licensed radio broadcasters seeking to reach their listeners. While this problem affects markets both large and small, it has been particularly prevalent in certain parts of the country, especially in the large markets of Boston, New York/Northern New Jersey, and Miami. These pirate operators threaten the livelihood of legitimate stations, suppressing audience reach and advertising revenues. Most importantly, pirates—and those who facilitate their operations—prevent listeners from receiving important life-saving and legally-required emergency alert messages. Further, they operate impervious to the regulatory fees consistent with the Appropriations process and to consumer protection requirements applicable to lawful broadcasters.

With passage of the PIRATE Act, Congress has demanded that increased attention be paid to radio pirates and that enforcement action by the Commission against these rogue operators be as aggressive as possible. This mandate was a welcome charge, as the Commission has sought more tools to combat pirate radio, but the Commission has its work cut out to meet expectations under the PIRATE Act, with an estimated 300-plus pirate operators nationwide. Thankfully, by substantially increasing allowable penalties and requiring annual sweeps, among other changes in law, the Act provides us with additional tools at our disposal to address this issue.

The Honorable Mike Quigley

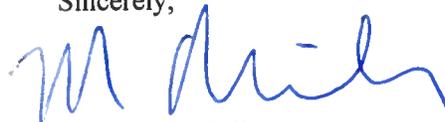
Page 2

March 11, 2020

Whether it is through new funding or a reallocation of existing resources, I respectfully request that the Subcommittee appropriately prioritize the harm caused by pirate radio, and the increased effort expected of the Commission to combat it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. O'Rielly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Michael O'Rielly