

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

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October 25, 2022

Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel:

We write to share the concerns of WPRI Channel 12, a local television station, located in East Providence, Rhode Island.

As the enclosed letter indicates, many Rhode Islanders have not had access to the programming offered by WPRI since October 14, 2022, due to a dispute between Nexstar Media Group and Verizon. While we take no position as to the merits of this dispute, we believe that Rhode Islanders should not be caught in the middle and as a consequence be left without access to local news and programming. We encourage the Federal Communications Commission to do everything in its power to help bring the parties together so that negotiations can continue in good faith.

We appreciate your consideration of our views and offer them within all applicable rules and regulations.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Enclosure



25 Catamore Boulevard
East Providence, RI 02914
401-228-1780

PATRICK WHOLEY
VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER

Oct. 15, 2022

Dear Senator Reed,

I am writing to inform you about the status of our negotiations with Verizon FiOS for its carriage of WPRI and *NewsNation* in Providence/New Bedford, in the event you receive inquiries from our viewers and your constituents.

Unfortunately, Verizon FiOS' contract to carry WPRI expired on Oct. 14, 2022, at 11:59 pm ET without a new agreement in place. With that expiration, Verizon FiOS removed carriage of the station from its systems' line-up. They also removed *NewsNation*, which carries live national newscasts as well as a variety of entertainment programming. The loss of WPRI and *NewsNation* on creates a difficult local news vacuum for our community, impacting thousands of viewers as we approach the mid-term elections and the winter storm season.

Since August, Nexstar has been negotiating tirelessly and in good faith to reach a mutually agreeable multi-year contract with Verizon FiOS, offering them the same fair market rates we offered to other large distribution partners with whom we successfully completed negotiations in 2022. Verizon FiOS has continuously proposed rates that are well below market for the valuable network and local community programming provided by our station(s), leaving us skeptical of whether they are motivated to reach a fair agreement.

Nexstar routinely reaches amicable retransmission and carriage agreements with its cable, satellite, and telco partners. Since the beginning of 2020, Nexstar has successfully completed agreements with 500 distribution partners, covering more than 90 percent of the company's nationwide footprint. In 2022 alone, we successfully completed agreements with more than 50 of our distribution partners.

The recently expired agreements between Verizon FiOS and Nexstar were entered into in 2019. Since that time, Verizon FiOS has reaped the benefit of paying out-of-date retransmission consent fees to Nexstar while instituting rate increases to its subscribers.

Verizon FiOS also ignores the fact that our reverse compensation (programming and content payments made by local broadcasters such as Nexstar to the networks) for our network affiliated programming continue to increase. Even more important, Nexstar continues to make investments for the benefit of our local viewers and distribution partners through expanded local news and other programming, the acquisition of costly life-saving weather equipment, and a broad range of other improved services. Nexstar has also committed additional resources to our national cable news network, *NewsNation*, expanding from 21 hours of live news programming per week to more than 60 hours per week.

We are extremely disappointed in the loss of service to our viewers. As you know, our station provides tremendous value to our local community.

In 2022, WPRI has accomplished the following.

- **The 46th Annual Meeting Street Telethon** – Was aired live on WPRI 12 and WPRI.com, February 5th at 7 PM and raised over \$500,000.
- **Winter Skate Break** for school vacation week at Bank Newport City Center in Downtown Providence held the week of February 20th, benefiting the Rhode Island Community Food Bank.
- **Potter League Love Bash for Animals** – Held virtually March 25th – April 14th.
- **Remarkable Women** – Cheryl Mele-Cunha was announced on April 4th as 2022's Remarkable Woman
- **Imagine Autism Walk** – Being held April 24th at Goddard Park in Warwick. All proceeds go to providing programs and services for children, teens, and adults living with Autism and their families.
- **PanCan Purple Stride** – Being held April 30th at Goddard Park in Warwick
- **Founder's Day-4** Sites are chosen around RI where staff employees volunteer for the day.

Without fair and equitable treatment, we will not be able to continue providing top quality news, sports, entertainment and other local programming, or support community events that are important to our viewers, like those noted above.

We have tried very hard to reach an agreement with Verizon FiOS and we remain committed to continuing to negotiate in good faith. We apologize for any inconvenience to you or your constituents. Please contact me at 401-228-1780 if you have any questions or would like more information.

We apologize for any inconvenience to you or your constituents, and we will continue to put our viewers first in providing value, supporting community, and upholding fairness in our business.

Thank you in advance for supporting local television.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Wholey', written in a cursive style.

Patrick Wholey
General Manager