

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1304
February 22, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write today with concerns about the amended proposal filed yesterday by Sinclair Broadcast Group for its proposed \$3.9 billion merger with Tribune Media Company. Sinclair's amended proposal falls far short of making meaningful divestments. Instead, it exploits loopholes to skirt the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) media ownership limits and enables Sinclair to continue to dictate content to divested stations, threatening the interests of local audiences and harming competition.

In their amended proposal, Sinclair disclosed its plan to divest from Tribune's WPIX-TV New York, WGN-TV Chicago, and KSWB-TV San Diego stations in order for the merger to comply with the FCC's 39 percent national media ownership cap. However, despite having the appearance of complying with the cap, the proposal also discloses that Sinclair already has purchase agreements with buyers for WPIX and WGN, which would allow Sinclair to avoid violating the FCC's media ownership limits while retaining the ability to remotely operate the stations.

While remotely operated stations would not count towards local or national FCC media ownership limits, Sinclair could still dictate content on these stations, including mandating Sinclair-produced segments. Sinclair also could be involved in decisions that result in firing local reporters. In fact, Sinclair has a concerning history of doing just that.

Sinclair's amended proposal has fallen far short of its obligation to comply with existing FCC media ownership limits and fails to protect the Congressionally identified public benefit gained from a competitive broadcast landscape that serves the diverse and unique interests of local audiences. I urge you to give the proposed merger careful consideration.

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