

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1504

October 30, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

The proposed acquisition of the Tribune Media Company by the Sinclair Broadcast Group is not in the interest of the American people—it would threaten diversity and localism in broadcasting, ignore the unique concerns and interests of local audiences, and harm competition.

If approved, the merged Sinclair-Tribune company would own or operate 233 stations nationwide and reach 72% of U.S. TV households—making it the nation's largest television broadcast company. Additionally, the new company would violate many long-standing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules. Unfortunately, it seems that Commission is now going out of its way to clear barriers to the deal by rolling back any rule that may pose a problem to it, including unnecessarily reinstating the outdated Ultra High Frequency discount, eliminating the Main Studio Rule, and 'relaxing' local media ownership limits.

This is on top of Sinclair's history of exploiting loopholes to skirt existing ownership caps by remotely operating stations while still dictating the content, including mandating Sinclair-produced segments such as the Terrorism Alert Desk, which regularly conflates Islam and terrorism, and firing many of the local reporters at the stations. With the Commission's recent actions, Sinclair no longer will even need to go through the formality of pretending to divest from local stations.

Congress explicitly directed the FCC to establish limits to how many households a single broadcasting company could reach because it recognized the public benefit gained from televising a diverse range of opinions and maintaining robust competition in broadcasting. Approving the proposed merger would go directly against this intent. Therefore, I urge you to give it 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