



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Jan. 26, 2020

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Alex Padilla
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Restoring and protecting local and independent media

Dear Senators Feinstein and Padilla,

Failures in our communications and information ecosystem are harming our communities. The latest example is the loss of carriage of Cox Media Group's two network broadcast TV stations' over Suddenlink Cable (Altice), the system operator serving most of the region's population. As a result, local news and information provided by Cox Media Group (CMG) owned stations KIEM (NBC) and KVIQ (CBS) are not available to cable subscribers.

We call upon those corporations to consider the impact on local communities, and note that Altice has offered CMG to continue carrying those stations while they negotiate their retransmission consent agreement. Ultimately, these absentee corporations are negotiating a cost that will be born by local cable subscribers in our region.

We also call upon Congress and the FCC to address the underlying policy actions needed to secure and protect media localism. Efforts like Congressman Huffman's proposed legislation, the Local and Independent Television Protection Act, deserve immediate attention and widespread support.

The FCC could reconvene their Localism Task Force to address the loss of diverse local voices. And State policymakers can reform the failed framework promoted by industry capture - like California's Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act which eviscerated local jurisdictions' authority to protect ourselves.

Ultimately, we need our federal and state policymakers to recognize the essential role that local media play to meet local needs for: public health and safety; education; economic and community development; culture and arts; and civic engagement. Local governments and our communities stand ready to take back local media and rebuild our information ecosystem to secure competition, diversity and localism in the marketplace of ideas.

Sincerely,

Virginia Bass
Chair, Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

CC: Federal Communications Commission
California State Association of Counties

National Association of Counties
Rural County Representatives of California