September 2, 2015

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

AM radio is the most diverse communications service in America. With relatively low barriers to entry, there are more minority-owned AM stations than any other outlet, including in top-ranked markets where audiences and advertising revenues are greatest.

The content of AM radio is similarly diverse. In addition to music, news and sports, AM radio is a primary source for cultural and in-language programming. As a result, AM radio is a crucial outlet for African American listeners to access the information and entertainment that is most relevant to their communities.

Unfortunately, AM radio stations face certain economic and technical challenges that are causing some listeners to migrate to newer, higher fidelity alternatives. In particular, a troubling number of minority-owned and other stations that lack access to capital have been forced to shut down or sell out, posing risks to radio diversity.

The FCC has tools at its disposal to enhance the AM radio experience, and we are heartened to learn that you are finally advancing the FCC’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service. However, it has come to our attention that you may reverse course on the most promising mechanism proposed therein: an application window for FM translators that is limited to AM licensees. Inclusion of this AM-only application window is essential to provide meaningful relief for AM radio.

The clearer signal reception and extended hours enabled by translators have allowed some minority-owned AM stations to attract more listeners and advertisers and improve their economic stability. But, as the FCC has recognized, translators are a scare commodity in many areas, blocking many AM broadcasters from obtaining a translator, or forcing them to participate in bidding wars that favor more powerful, well-funded stations. Too many minority-owned broadcasters lack the financial resources to purchase a translator, which means that listeners to these stations often receive lower quality service and programming than other audiences.

Opening this process increases the opportunity for minority participation and supports minority stations in their efforts to broadcast.

An AM-only application window for new FM translators would provide every AM radio broadcaster an equal opportunity to obtain a translator. Such an approach would also allow AM broadcasters to use their limited resources to improve service for listeners, leading to more
economically viable minority-owned AM radio stations, a more diverse broadcasting ecosystem, and more attractive options for urban, Hispanic, and in-language audiences.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the FCC promptly open an application window for FM translators that are limited to AM radio licensees.

Sincerely,

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

G.K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress

André Carson  
Member of Congress

Hakeem S. Jeffries  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

Marcia Fudge  
Member of Congress
The Honorable Bobby L. Rush  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2268 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  

Dear Congressman Rush:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

With the leadership of Commissioner Clyburn, we have reached a compromise that prioritizes assisting Class C and Class D stations, which are the most technically challenged stations in the AM band. Under this compromise, stations will be able to choose from two options for relief.

First, stations looking for immediate relief can partner with an existing FM translator up to 250 miles away, seeking approval under our minor modification rules. The first modification window – for Class C and D stations only – will begin in January 2016, after an outreach effort to educate station owners about the opportunities and choices that this window will provide. After the first modification window, a second modification window will open for all AM stations for three months.

Second, the item also now includes an AM-only auction window for Class C and D stations that will begin mid-2017, after the incentive auction and other auction events. Subsequent to this C and D window, an auction will be held for all AM Radio stations.

This compromise is responsive to the action requested in your letter, and we believe that it will help ensure the longevity of AM stations. The modification window option will get translators in the hands of AM station owners who most need them by early next year. For those stations that can wait, the addition of the auction window after the 2017 incentive auction gives AM stations another opportunity to enhance their audience reach by providing clearer signal reception. This tiered approach that provides relief to Class C and D stations first is the kind of common sense compromise that serves the public interest.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Tom Wheeler
The Honorable David Scott  
U.S. House of Representatives  
225 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Scott:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission's proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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Sincerely,

[Signature]

Tom Wheeler
The Honorable Stacey Plaskett  
U.S. House of Representatives  
509 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  

Dear Congresswoman Plaskett:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler
Dear Congressman Payne:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler
October 26, 2015

The Honorable Brenda Lawrence  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1237 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Lawrence:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

With the leadership of Commissioner Clyburn, we have reached a compromise that prioritizes assisting Class C and Class D stations, which are the most technically challenged stations in the AM band. Under this compromise, stations will be able to choose from two options for relief:

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Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler
October 26, 2015

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
U.S. House of Representatives
1339 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C.  20515

Dear Congressman Jeffries:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler
Dear Congresswoman Fudge:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler
October 26, 2015

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
U.S. House of Representatives
2235 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Cummings:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler
The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2351 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Clarke:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

With the leadership of Commissioner Clyburn, we have reached a compromise that prioritizes assisting Class C and Class D stations, which are the most technically challenged stations in the AM band. Under this compromise, stations will be able to choose from two options for relief.

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Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler
The Honorable André Carson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2453 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  

Dear Congressman Carson:  

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.  

With the leadership of Commissioner Clyburn, we have reached a compromise that prioritizes assisting Class C and Class D stations, which are the most technically challenged stations in the AM band. Under this compromise, stations will be able to choose from two options for relief.  

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.  

Sincerely,  

Tom Wheeler
October 26, 2015

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2305 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Butterfield:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler
The Honorable Karen Bass  
U.S. House of Representatives  
408 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Bass:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Commission’s proceeding to revitalize AM radio service, and expressing concern for the impact of minority-owned stations without an application window for FM translators limited to AM licensees. Your views are very important to me.

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