

January 15, 2020

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
U.S. House of Representative
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Co-sponsors for Protecting Community Television Act

Dear Representative Hoyer:

Since 1984, cable franchise agreements have included requirements designed to ensure that cable systems serve the needs and interests of the community, and in addition, required cable operators to pay for the use of public property in the form of a franchise fee of up to five (5%) percent of the cable operator's gross revenues from providing cable services. In the past, Congress made it very clear that franchise requirements "for the provision of services, facilities or equipment" should not be treated as franchise fees. The Federal Communications Commission overturned this longstanding practice and precedent, and declared that, with a few exceptions, localities must either eliminate franchise requirements, or allow the operator to deduct the "fair market value" of the requirements from the franchise fee. For example, if an operator voluntarily agreed to a senior, or veteran's or low income rate discount, the locality must either allow the operator to eliminate the discounts or pay the operator the value of the discount. The same is true to long-required courtesy connections provided to school districts and libraries

While the City of Bowie has joined with hundreds of others to challenge this FCC order in Court, I write to request your leadership in co-sponsoring the Protecting Community Television Act. This legislation seeks to protect benefits that were obtained consistent with the Cable Act and franchising principles in place since 1984. Moreover, the legislation will be introduced by Senator Edward Markey (Massachusetts) and Representative Anna Eshoo (California) and would thwart the efforts of the FCC by defining franchise fees to be limited to cash payments. Please contact the lead staff in Sen. Markey's office Bennett Butler (Bennett_Butler@markey.senate.gov) and Rep. Eshoo's office, Asad Ramzanali (asad.ramzanali@mail.house.gov) and add your name to this vitally important legislation.

Sincerely,

Bowie City Council
Timothy J. Adams
Mayor

cc: Senator Van Hollen
Senator Benjamin Cardin