

Testimony of  
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Thank you Chairman Powell and Commissioners for holding these hearings and for providing the North Carolina Family Policy Council the opportunity to participate.

The responsiveness of radio and television broadcasters to the needs and interests of local communities and to the standards that define these communities are of critical importance to the issue of localism.

While families across North Carolina and the nation have an ever-increasing number of radio and television programming options, this growth in choice does not necessarily translate into higher levels of local consumer satisfaction. In fact, we are hearing more concerns from both parents and children about the offensive and indecent content that pervades much of television and radio programming and advertising today.

The growth in competition for market share appears to be driving many to continually push the envelope of content and decency. The current trend toward so-called "reality" shows is a prime example. Although these shows may not rise to the level of indecency, they are designed to cater to the base interest of the viewer.

In North Carolina, we are fortunate to have the leadership of individuals like Jim Goodmon, whose CBS and Fox affiliates preempted a number of these programs, because they demean marriage and family and run counter to local community standards. If these stations were not locally owned and operated, there is little doubt that these programs would have been aired in the Raleigh/Durham area.

For this reason, the North Carolina Family Policy Council testified at an FCC Field Hearing on Media Concentration in March in opposition to the proposed increase in the national media ownership cap. We believe that a station owner who resides in his or her local community is more likely to understand and respond to local standards than someone making programming decisions from hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Even communities fortunate enough to have some responsive local broadcasters are still often overwhelmed by indecent radio and television content. Consumers must have a

reliable system to address offensive and indecent programming. Because the viewing and listening public bears the burden to prove the content and context of reported indecency, requiring local broadcasters to maintain and make available several months of program tapes or transcripts would aid citizens in their efforts to ensure that community standards are being upheld.

In addition, consumers rely upon the FCC to ensure that broadcasters are truly serving the public good. Strict enforcement of indecency and obscenity laws and regulations are critical. We thank the FCC, for example, for its recent action regarding indecent content on the “Opie and Anthony Show.” However, more swift and consistent enforcement action, including higher-level fines and the initiation of license revocation hearings, especially for repeat offenders, would instill a higher level of public confidence.

Localism at its core requires the involvement of local citizens. Providing a system of local programming that is respectful of community standards, as well as a realistic and responsive enforcement mechanism for addressing indecency violations, will encourage citizens to become more involved in local broadcasting and will help to ensure the quality programming we all desire.