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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515-6115

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March 25, 2004

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BUD ALBRIGHT, STAFF DIRECTOR

Ms. Susan D. Whiting
President and Chief Executive Officer
Nielsen Media Research
770 Broadway
New York, New York 10003

Dear Ms. Whiting:

As members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, we are writing to express our concern about the accuracy of Nielsen Media Research's accounting of Latino television viewership. We urge you to review this serious matter.

A recent study by the National Hispanic Media Council found that Nielsen Media Research's television ratings system severely undercounts Latino viewers, especially those who watch English-language television. The report attributed its findings to weaknesses in the methodology used by Nielsen, such as insufficient recruitment of U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinos for research panels and failure to include Latino markets with higher concentrations of U.S.-born Latinos in surveys.

Undercounting Latino television viewers has negative repercussions for both the Latino community and the television industry. It can ultimately lead to the cancellation of Latino-targeted programming and reluctance among executives to produce and air new Latino-oriented shows. Without such shows in production, significantly fewer employment opportunities exist for Latinos actors, writers, and other behind-the-camera professionals. Finally, a lack of Latino shows on television costs broadcasters millions of dollars in lost revenue from advertisers seeking to reach the fast growing Latino community, now the largest minority group in the United States with a purchasing power of \$653 billion in 2003.

In order to assess the accuracy level of Nielsen Media Research's ratings of Latino television viewership, we encourage you to seek an external audit of the system. Also, a thorough evaluation of the entertainment needs and preferences of U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinos would be helpful for the media industry to better understand the need for Latino-oriented programming.

Ms. Susan D. Whiting
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Nielsen Media Research has long been the authority on television viewership behavior for the television industry and advertising companies. It is critical that the information it produces be as accurate as possible. Falling short of this goal is a disservice not only to the television and advertising industries, but also to television viewers in general.

Again, we urge you to thoroughly review the accuracy of the Nielsen estimates of Latino television audiences. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



JOHN D. DINGELL



HILDA L. SOLIS



EDWARD J. MARKEY



CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

cc: The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet