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January 14, 2010

Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

I am pleased that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has initiated a proceeding to ensure that the Internet remains a vibrant, open, and free medium for innovation, entrepreneurship, and expression. Given the scope of recent telecommunications and broadcast mergers, it is important the Internet continues to provide an easily accessible platform for emerging entrepreneurs to develop business models and compete against traditional media platforms.

The growth of the Internet over the past decade has allowed for extraordinary activity among all users. It has been a medium that has facilitated and supported a diversity of information, expression, and ingenuity; a vehicle for economic activities and innovation; and a means for strengthening civil society and democratic governance. As a small number of firms have come to control large market shares and exert excessive regulation and influence over media output, the Internet has remained the last, truly free forum for independent thought and unfettered creativity.

Where local radio stations and newspapers have either closed or been acquired by larger firms, individuals have used the Internet to launch online publications, present podcasts and stream live audio and video featuring current news and information concerning their local communities. While syndicated satellite radio broadcasts may not be tailored to local or regional interests, a diversity of entrepreneurs can use the web as a platform to meet the demands of their local consumers.

Where producers or writers are unable to penetrate the corporate structures of major film and television production companies and studios, the Internet has provided a vehicle for them to distribute groundbreaking and diverse independent films and other

entertainment programming able to reach millions of Internet users across the country and beyond.

Altogether, an open Internet provides cable, satellite, broadcast, film, and other corporations with competition that will positively affect consumers. Accordingly, mainstream and traditional media outlets will have a better gauge of consumer demand and interest when measured against what consumers view on the web. In this view, the consumer benefits from a higher quality of programming and the options that stem from healthy competition.

To fully achieve the Internet's potential, my constituents must have the freedom and unrestricted ability to communicate and interact with each other. This unfettered access to the Internet is an essential component for economic, social, and political discourse. However, prohibition of access to any lawful content, applications, services, or devices can interfere with such vibrant activity and discourse. The same is true of practices which might degrade the functionality of devices or degrade the accessibility of certain applications, content, or services.

In light of recent challenges to and questions regarding the FCC's authority to preserve a free and open Internet, it is critical that the FCC has begun this proceeding. I support the FCC's approach to conduct this necessary proceeding in an open, deliberate, and transparent manner before adopting any protections necessary to maintain an open and secure Internet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maxine Waters".

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress