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North Carolina
Department of Administration

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Agency for Public Telecommunications
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August 23, 1999

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Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W., TWA325
Washington, DC 20004

Re: In the Matter of Creation of Low Power Radio Service
MM Docket No. 99-25
RM-9208
RM-9242

Dear Ms. Salas:

On behalf of the the Public Radio Advisory Committe of the North Carolina Agency for Public Telecommunications, we submit the following comments in the matter of creation of low power radio service. The Agency for Public Telecommucations (the Agency), a division of the North Carolina Department of Administration, provides general telecommunications advice and assistance to public agencies along with specific support services for media productions, teleconferencing, and live programming that promotes citizen involvement in government.

The Agency's Public Radio Advisory Committee (PRAC) is charged, among other things, with supporting the policy of the State that "at least one public radio signal shall be made available to every resident of North Carolina, [and] that there be diversity in the kinds of public radio licensees...." (GS 143B-426.12).

The nine-member PRAC is composed of elected representatives of three classes of non-commercial, non-religious radio stations in North Carolina, including one full-service, CPB-qualified station; one community-oriented station which is not CPB-qualified; and one campus-oriented station. In addition, the PRAC includes six gubernatorial appointments who are interested in public radio and its well-being in North Carolina.

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At its quarterly meeting in July, the Agency's Board of Telecommunications Commissioners asked the PRAC to respond to the FCC's proposed LPFM service. Acknowledging that the Agency is not equipped to perform or contract for complex engineering studies nor to research the legal questions and precedents involved in this matter, the Board directed the Agency staff to obtain opinions from North Carolina public radio stations that might be affected by the proposed LPFM service.

In response to the Board's directive, Agency staff talked with attendees at the summer meeting of the North Carolina Public Radio Association in August, reviewed comments filed on behalf of noncommercial educational radio members of the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters and read the summary of comments filed by National Public Radio, Inc. From this limited review, Agency staff reported to the PRAC that it appears North Carolina public radio stations could be harmed by the proposed LPFM service it if causes signal interference to existing stations, disrupts their plans for future growth, and further splinters an audience whose financial support is critical to public radio stations that already serve communities of all sizes across the state.

The Public Radio Advisory Committee of the North Carolina Agency for Public Telecommunications supports any effort which would promote continued diversity among noncommercial radio stations in this state. At the same time, the PRAC shares the concern of North Carolina stations which fear they will be adversely affected by the proposed LPFM service. Therefore, the PRAC strongly urges the FCC to consider the matter further, to study the technical and financial consequences and public policy outcome of its proposal, to consider the impact of LPFM on existing stations' unprotected secondary service areas and the listeners who depend on programming in those areas, and to assure that any action would not, intentionally or inadvertently, diminish the public radio service which is currently available to listeners in North Carolina.

Respectfully submitted

Vanessa Goodman Barnes

Vanessa Goodman Barnes
Chair
Public Radio Advisory Committee

Leila Tvedt

Leila Tvedt
Executive Director
Agency for Public Telecommunications