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DON W. HOOPER, PH.D.  
Office of the Superintendent

February 27, 2001

The Honorable Michael Powell  
Chairman of the FCC  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Chairman Powell:

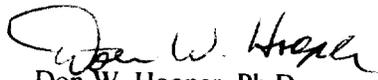
Distance learning programs are becoming more and more a part of the public school curriculum and professional development repertoire for educators, especially in the Houston, Texas area. With increasing numbers of students, teacher shortages, and accountability standards, distance learning provides significant strategies to address these critical needs. Developing and established technologies alike are used to deliver these distance learning programs to our schools in the Texas gulf coast region as well as across the United States. The viability of one successful technology, Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS), finds itself under threat from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

In the Houston area, ITFS has been used for fifteen years to broadcast for-credit high school classes to our schools where small numbers make offering some courses through traditional means unfeasible. ITFS is also used to deliver professional development opportunities for our teachers and administrators so that they do not have to leave their campuses. Enrichment programs bring electronic field trips to students where budgets and tight calendars do not permit physical visits. All in all, ITFS has proven itself to be a reliable medium for the delivery of broadcast-quality service to our constituencies.

The FCC is considering relocating the frequencies on which current ITFS channels operate. There is the likelihood that relocating these frequencies will degrade the quality of service and jeopardize the existence of these networks. The FCC, several years ago, passed rules that permit alliances between ITFS license holders (which must be educational entities) and wireless cable operators in order to fully utilize the ITFS spectrum. Education organizations, mostly public school districts, have come to count on the programming and fiscal benefits from these relationships in order to deliver services to students.

ITFS is a tried and true distance learning technology that can continue to add value educational programs for years to come. New developments in the field for two-way delivery and repeater stations will make ITFS an even more useful tool for our schools. Please oppose the proposed rule changes currently before the FCC in regards to ITFS frequency relocation.

Sincerely,

  
Don W. Hooper, Ph.D.

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