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BIRMINGHAM
CITY SCHOOLS

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Division of Integrated Technology Programs
Birmingham Board of Education

May 4, 2001

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Chairman Powell
Commissioners Furchgott-Roth, Ness, and Tristani
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20554

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RE: ITFS

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear FCC Commissioners,

I write to you about an issue of tremendous importance to our community, the ITFS (Instructional Television Fixed Service) spectrum. ITFS is both an important part of our educational program at Birmingham City Schools in Birmingham, Alabama and critical if wireless broadband is to become a reality for our students and our entire community.

ITFS is a distance learning technology that has provided teacher training and classroom instruction to millions of students across the United States for more than 35 years. Nationally, nearly 1300 ITFS licensees serve thousands of public and parochial schools, colleges, and universities, providing greater access to professional development, more efficient delivery of curriculum, and various other educational opportunities.

This valuable service has recently come under assault from the wireless telephone industry. Third generation (3G) cell phone service providers are seeking more digital spectrum and have specifically targeted the 2.5hz band, presently occupied by ITFS. Indeed, 3G providers have formally petitioned the FCC to take ITFS away from educators in order to accommodate the wireless industry's needs.

The Birmingham City Schools Instructional Broadcast Services and Distance Learning Department airs over 140 hours of educational programming each weekday on four ITFS channels. These four channels are viewed at 77 receive sites in the Birmingham City School District. We also simulcast two hours per day on Time-Warner Cable Public Access. This ability has afforded us the opportunity to reach over 77,000 households in the Birmingham area where we offer live on-camera homework tutoring, professional development workshops for teachers, adult-literacy programs and replays of school events. Obviously, community involvement is one of our top goals. ITFS and cable simulcasts help us achieve those goals.

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The FCC's Final Report on Instructional Fixed Television Services, issued March 30, 2001, supports what licensees have been saying all along – **relocating all or part of ITFS would be a grave mistake**. Doing so would disrupt existing ITFS services, be extremely difficult if not impossible from a technical perspective, and carry heavy financial costs. Moreover, relocation would hamper existing efforts to extend digital opportunity. The ITFS community—in conjunction with their MMDS partners—is on the brink of expanding its capabilities to provide broadband wireless Internet access and high-speed data transmissions in addition to traditional video programming. This new frontier not only promises inexpensive high-speed broadband access for educational institutions, but also **high-speed access for thousands of underserved communities, including those bypassed by DSL and cable modem service, across the United States**.

Given the considerable benefits of ITFS and the your agency's findings, we urge you to stand up for the students and teachers and not relocate any part of the ITFS spectrum. We at the Birmingham City Schools hope that you will continue to support us in our ongoing educational mission by maintaining the integrity of our spectrum.

Sincerely,



Kenneth M. Wasmund

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