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LESSEN

Lower Eastern Shore Shared Educational Network

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August 16, 2001

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Senator Barbara A. Mikulski
Suite 709
Hart Senate Office Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

00-258

Dear Senator Mikulski,

On behalf of LESSEN (Lower Eastern Shore Shared Education Network), we write to you about an issue of importance to our community: the ITFS (Instructional Television Fixed Services) spectrum. Specifically, we ask you to support the educators in your district and urge the Federal Communications Commission to remove the ITFS spectrum from consideration in its deliberations over finding a new home for new cellular phone services.

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. ITFS licensees serve thousands of public and parochial schools, colleges, and universities, providing greater access to professional development, expanded curricular opportunities, and various other educational offerings. In our community Salisbury University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and Wor-Wic Community College use the ITFS to provide distance learning programs to schools and businesses in the three county area of the lower eastern shore of Maryland.

Additionally, ITFS networks are a bridge across the digital divide. ITFS licensees in conjunction with their commercial partners are upgrading their systems to provide two-way, high speed broadband Internet and video access to educational institutions, homes, and small businesses. This development promises affordable high-speed access for thousands of underserved communities, including those bypassed by DSL and cable modem service, across the United States.

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Lifelong learning services from
Salisbury State University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and Wor-Wic Community College.
Salisbury State University • CH185A • 1101 Camden Avenue • Salisbury, MD 21801
(410) 548-4774 • FAX (410) 548-3000 • TTY (410) 543-6083

These benefits notwithstanding, the future of ITFS has been called into doubt. Third generation cell phone service (also known as 3G) providers want additional spectrum for new mobile phone services. The FCC has targeted the ITFS spectrum as a possible choice. Earlier this year, a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proceeding on this issue found that the cellular industry is generally uninterested because they want to use the 1.7GHz band currently occupied by the military for 3G services. Furthermore, the FCC itself found in March that using the ITFS spectrum would be virtually impossible for technical reasons. Unfortunately, the FCC has repeatedly delayed making a decision on ITFS. With the postponement of a previously scheduled July 2001 decision, the future of the educational spectrum continues to hang in the balance.

Given the demonstrated benefit of ITFS, the lack of desire for the spectrum on the part of the 3G industry, and the FCC's findings, we urge you to stand up for students and teachers in your district and directly urge the FCC to remove the ITFS spectrum from the list of candidates for 3G service spectrum immediately. We at LESSEN hope that you will support us in our ongoing educational mission by maintaining the integrity of our spectrum. If you would like additional information about ITFS or have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Bill Chalanick at (410) 548-4774.

Sincerely,



Bill Chalanick
Executive Director