



FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

"You Are Why We Are Here"

March 30, 2020

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Chairman Pai and Commission Board:

The COVID-19 pandemic has gripped the world. Our daily lives are impacted through Declarations of Emergency, Presidential Guidelines, State Executive Orders, and our individual commitment to 'slow the spread'. Americans everywhere are concerned for public health and apprehensive of the economic impact. In Northeast Georgia, our citizens are facing another issue in the midst of the coronavirus – the fear of the unknown – in our own state and in our own community.

States across our great nation are implementing mitigation strategies to battle the spread of the COVID-19 virus. These *state-specific* strategies are constantly updated as the situation within our geographical borders evolves. In Georgia, the most at-risk citizens, including the medically fragile, are sheltered at home by order of the Governor. For some, the television is the only window to the outside world. For our citizens in Franklin, Hart, Stephens, and Elbert Counties, the view of the world is filtered through "orphan" eyes. Instead of Georgia broadcasts, our citizens are only allowed to see non-applicable Carolina broadcasts through satellite providers in our rural area.

We respectfully ask the Commission to uphold the 2018/2019 market modifications¹ that were rightfully granted to each of the Northeast Georgia Counties. Please accelerate any mandated review of the petitions, appeals, and related documentation for each County. **Secondly, in this time of declared emergency, we are asking that the Commission, stations, and satellite providers work together to provide access to Georgia news to our Georgia residents immediately.** While we recognize the final transition would have to be implemented through contract negotiations, we are asking that special consideration be granted in this State of Emergency to provide our citizens with the Georgia news and broadcasts that impacts their daily lives and actions during this pandemic.

After years of focused effort, the awarded market modifications were considered a great success for the people of Northeast Georgia. Communication and education through television and local, state-specific broadcasts have never been as important as it is now in fight against this disease. On behalf of the citizens that we serve, I implore you to take action now.

Beth Thomas
County Manager

¹ Franklin County, GA M&O dated September 17, 2018; Hart County, GA M&O dated October 12, 2018; Stephens County, GA M&O dated April 4, 2019; Elbert County, GA M&O dated July 7, 2019