

September 22, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the undersigned media executives, we write today to ask for your support of the *Expanding Broadcast Ownership Opportunities Act* introduced by Reps. G.K. Butterfield and Steven Horsford and the *Broadcast Varied Ownership Incentives for Community Expanded Service Act* (Broadcast VOICES Act) introduced by Sens. Gary Peters and Robert Menendez. Supporting these pieces of legislation would show your support for women, communities of color and socially disadvantaged groups as this legislation would reinstate the broadcast diversity tax certificate and create new opportunities for these individuals to pursue broadcast television and radio station ownership.

Broadcasters provide important information, news and entertainment that connect and reflect the diverse communities we serve including women and communities of color. In today's media marketplace, localism and ensuring that our programming reflects the communities we serve is not only in the public interest, but it's good business. When the broadcast diversity tax certificate program existed from 1978 to 1995, it demonstrated its success in increasing broadcast ownership among people of color. During the program's lifespan, broadcast ownership by these groups increased by more than 550 percent. With the elimination of the program in 1995, women and communities of color have been disproportionately impacted. As demonstrated in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) *Fifth Report on Ownership of Broadcast Stations* from September 2021, women and people of color lag behind their male and White counterparts in owning a majority interest in commercial broadcast stations. According to the FCC's September 2021 report on broadcast station ownership, women held a majority ownership interest in only 8% of commercial broadcast stations compared to 65% among men. Among racial minority groups (or people of color), only 4% of commercial broadcast stations held a majority ownership interest by people of color, compared to 76% among white persons¹. As you can see from these data points, more needs to be done to level the playing field for underrepresented broadcasters and the *Expanding Broadcast Ownership Opportunities Act* and

¹ Fifth Report on Ownership of Broadcast Stations, FCC Form 323 and Form 323-E Ownership Data as of October 1, 2019 (MB 2021), <https://www.fcc.gov/biennial-forms-323-and-323-e-broadcast-ownership-data-and-reports> (*Fifth 323 and 323-E Report*).

the *Broadcast VOICES Act*, can serve as that catalyst to ensure broadcasters reflect diverse points of view to respond, reflect and serve local communities.

These bills would create opportunities to entry for women and people of color to be included in deal flow and enhances opportunities to raise the capital needed to become station owners. Understanding the fundamentals of purchasing, owning, and running a successful broadcast operation, along with having existing relationships with companies and individuals in this sector of the broadcast industry are all challenges many of these individuals have faced and continue to face today.

Over 20 years ago, broadcasters recognized these challenges and understood the importance of preparing the next cadre of talented senior level broadcasters, particularly women and people of color, with the launch of the Broadcast Leadership Training program (also known as BLT). The BLT is a collaborative effort between the NAB Leadership Foundation and Diane Sutter, president and CEO of ShootingStar Broadcasting. Diane, she herself, has been a successful broadcast television station owner who has raised capital. Diane's experience and challenges while undergoing this process served as the impetus for this program to help others, especially women and people of color, to navigate this challenging process.

The BLT is a 10-month Executive-MBA style program that exposes talented senior level broadcasters, particularly women and people of color, who aspire to advance as group executives or station owners, to the fundamentals of purchasing, owning, and running a successful broadcast operation. The BLT program is supported through investments by other broadcasters throughout the industry and has successfully graduated 343 senior level broadcasters. Of those graduates, over 65 percent have been promoted one or more times, and 55 individuals have been or currently are station owners.

In order to increase diversity within the broadcast industry, it is critical that we prioritize removing any barriers to entry for women, people of color and socially disadvantaged individuals who are pursuing broadcast ownership opportunities. The *Expanding Broadcast Ownership Opportunities Act* and the *Broadcast VOICES Act* would create those opportunities for women, communities of color, and socially disadvantaged individuals, thereby ensuring broadcaster voices are as diverse as the communities they serve.

We respectfully urge you to consider swift passage of these pieces of legislation. Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership in giving women and communities of color a voice and a viable presence in the broadcast industry.

Sincerely,

Diane Sutter
Dean, BLT Program
President/CEO, ShootingStar Broadcasting

Marc Jaromin
Associate Dean, BLT Program/BLT Graduate
Vice President & General Manager,
The E.W. Scripps Company

Trila Bumstead
Associate Dean, BLT Program/BLT Graduate
Owner, Ohana Media Group, LLC

Anita S. Graham
Associate Dean, BLT Program
Managing Director, Graham and Associates