

**Children Now Testimony
FCC Media Ownership Hearing
Seattle, Washington
November 9, 2007**

Good evening. Chairman Martin and Commissioners Copps, Adelstein and McDowell: thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Christy Glaubke and I am the Director of the Children and the Media Program at Children Now. For the past 14 years, Children Now has been dedicated to creating a safe and enriching media environment for children. We conduct research on media's effects, educate industry executives about ways to use media to serve children's developmental needs and, when necessary, advocate for federal media policies that protect the best interests of children.

We have been studying the effects of media consolidation on children since the FCC's last ownership proceeding in 2002. The quantity of children's programming is one of only a handful of ways that citizens can measure broadcasters' commitment to serve the public interest. In addition, we know that quality educational television can be a powerful learning tool, and can help prepare children for success in school. We want to ensure that all children have access to the full educational potential of television.

Children Now strongly believes that the Commission should not proceed with its rulemaking without first considering how children are affected by media consolidation. In 2003, we conducted *Big Media, Little Kids*, a groundbreaking study that looked at the influence of duopolies on children's programming in Los Angeles. The results of this study clearly showed that the duopolies in Los Angeles diminished both the availability and diversity of programs for children.

This fall, Children Now released a second study to see if our findings in Los Angeles held up in other markets. *Big Media, Little Kids 2* expanded upon our original study by analyzing children's programming in eight broadcast markets throughout the country: Atlanta, GA; Buffalo, NY; Chicago, IL; El Paso, TX; Indianapolis, IN; Nashville, TN; Portland-Auburn, ME; and Spokane, WA.

Our goal was to test the National Association of Broadcasters' claim that duopolies are "necessary to preserve and enhance broadcasters' ability to serve the public interest." If this is true, we expected to find that duopoly stations would decrease their children's programming less over time and offer more children's programming today than their non-duopoly counterparts. Actually, we found quite the opposite to be true.

First, we found that the 21 duopoly stations in the sample decreased their weekly hours of children’s programming four times more than non-duopoly stations, and their number of children’s series five times more than non-duopoly stations. In 1998, stations that would become part of duopolies were prolific providers of children’s programming. However, by 2006, duopoly stations cut an average of nearly 14 hours of children’s programming per week per station – far more than the three and a half hours eliminated by non-duopoly stations.

Of even greater importance for children, we found that duopoly stations eliminated two and a half times more educational programming than did non-duopoly stations.

Second, we found that by 2006, there was virtually no difference in the quantity of children’s programming on duopoly and non-duopoly stations. This finding proves that duopolies do not allow broadcasters to “enhance” their service to children.

Finally, we made a couple discoveries that we believe demand the attention of the FCC. **First, we found that a paltry 1% of children’s programs were locally-produced.** Local programming positively influences children’s self-concepts and increases their civic awareness and engagement. This should be a compelling finding for the Commission given your charge to protect localism.

Second, based upon some of the programs we viewed, we believe the FCC must take steps to better-define what constitutes an “educational children’s program” since many broadcasters don’t seem to understand what that means. One station claims they are educating children by broadcasting a show that teaches viewers how to stop smoking. Other broadcasters have claimed to teach children about shark behavior with a program about a pet shark that talked, walked on his tail fins and, in one episode, became a vegetarian. I don’t think anyone could argue that either of these programs contains content that appropriately educates children. We are currently conducting a study to assess the quality of children’s educational programs, but even this preliminary research points to a need for a clearer definition of “educational.”

In conclusion, we feel these findings clearly indicate that, contrary to the NAB’s claims, children are not better-served by duopoly stations. Our studies show a clear pattern of duopoly stations turning their backs on children. They raise several questions about big media’s commitments to serve the public interest, especially when that commitment doesn’t serve their bottom line. They provide compelling evidence that when big media win, little kids lose. We ask you to consider the influence of media consolidation on children as you make your decision on media ownership and that you will commit to taking the necessary steps to ensure that broadcasters are fulfilling their obligations to serve the youngest television viewers.