

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2018

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer:

As Members of both the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), we write concerning your consideration of potential nominees to fill any vacancy left on the panel of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), if Commissioner Mignon Clyburn decides to retire from that panel. We have a comprehensive appreciation of the invaluable contribution Commissioner Clyburn has made during her tenure at the Commission to date. We also believe in the urgent need to both preserve the unique voice she represents and build upon the work she has done through any nominee you would choose. In our own review of the several names mentioned, publicly and privately, in the context of your search, we believe that unique role can best be filled by Geoffrey Starks.

Geoffrey Starks is uniquely qualified to serve as Commissioner and carry on the important work of Commissioner Clyburn. We find that Mr. Starks' core values mirror those of Commissioner Clyburn – protecting consumers, giving a voice to the most vulnerable, and holding wrongdoers accountable. As Assistant Bureau Chief at the FCC, Mr. Starks has a strong track record of crafting real, lasting solutions to complex matters. His focus has consistently been on closing the digital divide by bringing more broadband to rural, low-income, and under-served communities, on building transformational 5G infrastructure that will help deliver the largest wireless platform for innovation in the world, and on advancing broadband telemedicine programs that will improve access to quality medical services and health outcomes. He also made a sustained effort to protect the interests of African-American communities on an issue that disproportionately affects its members by issuing the largest fine ever against an inmate calling service provider for violations. He also secured the return of nearly \$6 million dollars in improper payments solicited from the rural health care program, thus enabling proper disbursement of those monies to support the provision of broadband internet service to rural hospitals and health care providers across the country.

Commissioner Mignon Clyburn's contributions to the country and more specifically to the African American community have proven to be invaluable. Commissioner Clyburn is a tireless advocate for bridging the digital divide for minorities, the unserved and the under-served in both urban and rural America. On issues that disproportionately impact African-Americans, such as inmate calling services (ICS) and the Lifeline program, she

has been our community's and the Nation's clearest and most persuasive voice. Her important work in the foregoing areas must continue. That is why we urge you to fill any eventual vacancy in her seat on the Commission by an African American of considerable substantive experience in the field of telecommunications. We need such a person to extend the legacy of Chairmen William Kennard and Michael Powell, and Commissioners Benjamin Hooks, Andrew Barrett, and now, Mignon Clyburn.

For all the foregoing reasons, with the highest measure of enthusiasm and keen awareness of the work yet to be done on telecommunications policies that affect minority and underserved populations in our country, we urge you to recommend the nomination of Geoffrey Starks to succeed Commissioner Mignon Clyburn.

Sincerely,



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

cc:// Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation