The Leadership Conference
on Civil and Human Rights

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The Leadership Conference

November 9, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell,

On behalf of the undersigned civil rights groups, we write to urge you to delay the confirmation hearing (and any respective vote) for Danielle Thumann Severs regarding her appointment as Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner until Commissioner Anna Gomez has been renominated alongside Ms. Thumann Severs and both nominees are moved through the confirmation process together.

President Trump and other administration officials have repeatedly undermined the traditional independence of regulatory bodies, setting a perilous precedent that puts at risk their mission to safeguard the American public. The nomination of Ms. Thumann Severs, a Republican, without an accompanying nomination of a Democrat, is a breach of democratic norms that raises serious concerns about the separation of powers that has protected our democracy for generations. Confirmation of Ms. Thumann Severs would create a three-member Republican majority that could constitute a quorum without the Commission's sole Democratic member, putting her continued service at risk. Senate confirmation is meaningless if confirmed officials can be summarily dismissed without cause, as has occurred at other regulatory bodies, raising serious questions about the efficacy and purpose of the confirmation process itself.

Independent agencies should not be extensions of presidential will: their leaders should exercise independent judgement based on their expertise and statutory mandates. The FCC will perform its functions of ensuring universal connectivity, promoting diverse voices in our media ecosystem, and protecting consumers from fraud through robocalls and other means more effectively with robust debate and varying viewpoints. A bipartisan set of five commissioners, as Congress intended, will more effectively meet those goals. The Senate should ensure that Commissioner Gomez remains at the Commission.

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FCC Chairman Brendan Carr's conduct over the past year highlights the need for a fully staffed FCC capable of providing a number of checks on the Chairman, including providing great transparency into the Commission's actions, ensuring the administrative record is complete, raising important questions during proceedings, and meeting consumers. In our previous letter (sent December 17, 2025) to this Committee, we highlighted our concerns with the behavior — the pressuring of broadcasters, gutting of media diversity rules, coercion of companies to pull back of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and aiding attempts by the Administration to limit the ability of states to regulate artificial intelligence — under Chairman Carr's leadership.[1] In the nine months since that letter, Chair Carr has continued to threaten broadcasters and gut critical federal programs like Lifeline and E-Rate.[2] A check on these actions is needed now more than ever, and Commissioner Gomez has been an outspoken critic of many actions taken by the Commission over the past two years.[3]

The Senate had an opportunity to obtain these concessions from the Administration last year when Commissioner Trusty was nominated, but failed to make any effort to protect the dignity of the confirmation process or the independence of the Federal Communications Commission. We ask that you not make the same mistake with this nomination, and delay holding a confirmation hearing or vote until Commissioner Gomez has been renominated and voted out of committee alongside Ms. Thumann Severs.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective. Should you require further information or have any questions regarding this issue, please feel free to contact Jonathan Walter, senior policy counsel, at walter@civilrights.org,

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
American Library Association
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Common Cause
Communications Workers of America
Feminist Majority Foundation
Hispanic Federation

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[1] The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, "Leadership Conference Letter to Senate Commerce Committee on FCC Oversight Hearing," (Dec. 17, 2025), https://civilrights.org/resource/letter-senate-commerce-committee-fcc-oversight-hearing/.

[2] *See* Joel Simon, "Why ABC Self-Censored," *Columbia Journalism Review* (Sept. 2, 2026), https://www.cjr.org/analysis/why-abc-self-censored-disney-lawsuit-government-pressure-fcc-carr-kimmel-untested-legal-strategy.php; Keely Quinlan, "Advocacy Groups Oppose FCC's Proposed Changes to Lifeline Broadband Program," *State Scoop* (Feb. 18, 2026), https://statescoop.com/advocacy-groups-fcc-proposed-changes-lifeline-broadband/.

[3] Caitlin Huston, "Lone Democrat on the FCC Wants to Keep Fighting," *Hollywood Reporter* (Aug. 31, 2026), https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/politics-news/anna-gomez-fcc-renominated-1236684468/.

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League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MMTC
National Action Network
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Urban League
UnidosUS
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry

Cc:

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