

June 6, 2023

The Honorable Nanette Barragán
Chairwoman
Congressional Hispanic Caucus
United States House of Representatives
2312 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Judy Chu
Chairwoman
Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus
United States House of Representatives
2423 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steven Horsford
Chairman
Congressional Black Caucus
United States House of Representatives
406 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Barragán, Chairwoman Chu and Chairman Horsford,

On behalf of the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council, (MMTC) and a coalition of civil rights, tech and telecommunications organizations, we are writing to you today to emphasize the importance of AM radio for multicultural communities across the United States and to ask you to please co-sponsor the AM for Every Vehicle Act (H.R. 3413/S. 1669). This bill would direct federal regulators to require automakers to maintain AM broadcast radio in their new vehicles at no additional charge to consumers, as a safety feature critical to ensuring that Americans can be alerted to impending danger.

According to a recent report from Nielsen, over 80 million people in the United States listen to AM radio each month. This number is especially significant for communities of color and underrepresented groups that have a limited number of media outlets that cater to their specific needs. AM radio helps to fill that gap by providing a platform for locally produced content that is relevant to their audience and speaks to their unique cultural and linguistic needs. It is also significant to point out that AM radio serves as an entry point for radio station ownership by many ethnic and racial minorities. Some of the broadcast radio owners that got their start in AM radio include Urban One, Inc., Spanish Broadcasting System, Inner City Media Corp, Bustos Media Holding, LLC, Asian American Broadcasting, Zamora Broadcasting and Multicultural Radio Broadcasting, Inc. AM radio not only serves as an entry point for minority station ownership, it also highlights the importance of minority station owners curating content that is hyper local and unique to the local communities served by AM radio stations. According to the FCC's 6th Report on Minority Media Ownership (issued in 2022), there are over 1,200 Commercial AM stations that are wholly or partially owned by a racial or ethnic minority.

AM radio also plays a vital role in providing communities of color and underrepresented groups with religious and in-language programming. For many immigrants, being able to hear religious services or programs in their native language enables them to maintain cultural connections and foster a sense of community. There are over 600 AM stations likely to broadcast all or some of their content in a language other than English. Delivering this content over-the-air ensures that it is accessible to those who may not have reliable internet access or who cannot afford subscription services. This is particularly true in rural areas, where wireless connections are inconsistent and broadband often non-existent. AM radio is widely available, always on, and accessible without subscription fees or data caps. AM broadcasts are also particularly well suited for those travelling long distances, due to AM's skywave service.

Furthermore, AM radio provides a critical source of local news and information for communities that may be overlooked by larger media outlets. Many AM radio stations are locally owned and operated, so they have an interest in covering stories that are important to their communities. AM broadcasters ensure that their listeners have access to important information that directly impacts their lives. This information is crucial in times of emergency and natural disasters when power outages often cause wireless networks to fail. Removing AM from the dash undermines the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) system for delivering critical public safety information to the public.

While the recent announcement by the Ford Motor Company to keep AM radio in all 2024 Ford vehicles and to restore AM broadcast capability in EVs without it, is a step in the right direction, it is crucial that all vehicles in the U.S. include AM radio as a safety feature. In conclusion, given the importance of AM radio for multicultural communities we respectfully request that you co-sponsor the AM radio Every Vehicle Act.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council
Robert Branson, Esq., President and Chief Executive Officer
David Honig, President Emeritus and Senior Advisor; Co-founder of MMTC

ALLvanza
Rosa Mendoza, Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer

National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters
James Winston, President

National Urban League
Marc H. Morial, President and Chief Executive Officer
Yvette Badu-Nimako, Esq., Interim Executive Director, Washington Bureau

OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
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Ken Lee, Chief Executive Officer Emeritus