

FILING COMMENTS

Palmetto AgriBusiness Council
Cathy Novinger, Executive Director

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing this letter on behalf of Palmetto Agribusiness Council and the members and partners that support this industry in South Carolina. Palmetto Agribusiness Council (PABC) is a 501C6 organization representing the agriculture and forestry sectors in South Carolina. Our mission is to present a unified voice for our state's number one economic impact industry and expand agribusiness through business expansion, business recruitment and value added opportunities. Our industry is the backbone of our rural counties and the future of many of our rural, distressed counties in South Carolina. Agribusiness in South Carolina represents a \$32B industry sector with 200,000 jobs.

Many of our economic development opportunities in our industry require state-of-the-art technical support systems... specifically high speed, broadband options. Growth opportunities in these rural areas are hampered due to the lack of access, and business requirements include in particular access to high-speed broadband networks. We can no longer provide excuses for not offering our rural areas the same opportunities that urban areas enjoy and expect these rural areas to prosper. Rural areas faced similar obstacles in the early 20th century when electricity was not available to rural areas which ultimately required an entire government agency to get the job done. Fortunately, our private sector has the capabilities to do that today.

We strongly support the proposed AT&T/DirectTV merger that will result in expanding broadband to many rural areas in South Carolina, enhancing services and improving the content and offerings not available now, in meeting the various needs of business/industry and residential customers. Our value-added opportunities for agribusiness can grow and prosper with the infrastructure needs that they require...but without it we are stifled.

The Palmetto Agribusiness Council, our members and partners strongly encourage you to support and approve this merger for the future of agribusiness and the rural areas that we represent.