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The Digital Television Transition  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Communications, Technology and the Internet

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Testimony of Mark Lloyd  
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Leadership Conference on Civil Rights/LCCR Education Fund

My name is Mark Lloyd. I am the Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives at the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund. LCCREF is a national social justice organization working to establish equal opportunity in America through education and public outreach. We have been working on informing the public about the digital television transition for over two years now. This work includes participating in the DTV Steering Committee and coalition, presenting at national conferences, and thanks to a grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, we began working on the ground in seven markets last December to assist vulnerable populations make the transition to digital. These populations include the poor, ethnic minorities, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

In Portland, Seattle/Tacoma, the San Francisco Bay area, San Antonio, Minneapolis, Detroit, and Atlanta we are assisting with filing applications for DTV converter box coupon requests, helping people identify and acquire the converter box most appropriate to their needs and working to help people set up the equipment to continue to receive over the air television service. We

believe that all Americans should have access to free over the air television, our work on the ground has confirmed that free service over the public airways is a vital lifeline in our communities.

We would like to thank Congress for adjusting the TV Translator program and authorizing NTIA to distribute additional funds for educational work. It is this funding that has made our work in the seven cities possible. And we would like to thank you for extending the transition date to June 12 and providing additional funds to support the educational and outreach effort. We can assure you that many Americans in the communities we are in were panicked once NTIA announced they had run out of funds and were establishing a waiting list for coupons. More time was needed to prepare for the transition.

We can also assure you that we have made good use of tax payer dollars in our outreach to vulnerable communities. In our seven markets we have opened up 16 DTV Assistance Centers, established relations with another 20 DTV partners and have provided direct assistance to roughly 20,000 individuals in several different languages. In each of our cities we have established coupon exchange programs. Our DTV Assistance Centers and other partners help roughly 100 walk-ins and telephone callers every day. We have connected community groups to both mainstream public and commercial media. And our work with ethnic media has allowed us to reach groups the ubiquitous TV psa's did not reach.

All of our assistance centers were inundated with calls on February 17 and the two days that followed. Many of the calls were about reception problems, but for the most part they reflected a

general confusion about the transition. The calls petered out after those first few days, but the confusion still continues.

We are now providing daily news updates to some 70 people working on our front lines. We cull news articles and reports that we get from our contacts here at the FCC, at NTIA, the White House, the Hill, and the DTV Transition Coalition. But we also provide a central hub for all of our different partners to learn and share with each other.

One of the key problems continues to be reception. A converter box is sometimes simply not enough, many of those who call us need new antennae, sometimes they need a powered antennae. We have found the FCC's new online map very useful in helping us identify potential signals at a location. We have also found DTV reception to be inconsistent not only within the same community, but within the same apartment building. Our local partners have been careful to say they can provide general guidance but cannot predict what channels a viewer should get.

We believe the work of identifying marginalized communities before the transition is vital, but we have also long called for a rapid response plan to identify and serve those households which, for one reason or another, fell through the cracks. We believe this work will continue in the weeks past mid-June.

We would very much like to continue to assist in the effort to help vulnerable communities keep their over the air television service. As of today, we are all up in the air as to whether we will be

funded and as to whether we will be able to continue to play our role as a vital hub and continue to fund our partners.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about our work. I look forward to your questions.