Antoine Haywood Comment

I am a media maker, scholar, activist, and educator writing to express opposition to the proposed new rules that will allow all cable-related and in-kind contributions, other than PEG capital costs and build out requirements, to be treated as "franchise fees." This policy change will be a devastating blow to the health of our country's valuable PEG media system. It's upsetting to continue witnessing threats to our public interest media system. From funding cuts to public broadcasting to many PEG stations going dark as a result of state franchising, the past 10+ years have been truly troubling and discouraging. Compared to other countries our public media system is meager and the least funded. Yet, thousands of public, educations, and government channels continue to survive and provide vital information and much needed community spaces where citizens can engage in public fora. I am not against mainstream commercial media. I think popular media streams are necessary. I also believe the Internet and social media do provide endless opportunities for good public discourse. However, our country also deserves a balanced media system that offers quality entertainment, education, and civic information. It's not possible for mainstream commercial media to offer that type of content well. Mainstream media cannot substitute nor serve as an alternative to the mission-driven public services that PEG operations do for their immediate communities. If municipalities suffer from a serious decrease in revenue from their franchise fees, they will be faced with a hard decision to severely cut and drastically restructure their community media infrastructures. This scenario would lead to millions of people in small towns and major cities to lose access one of our counties oldest truly democratized communication practices.