



NABOB

National Association of
Black Owned Broadcasters

July 13, 2023

The Honorable Reverend Raphael Warnock
United States Senate
416 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warnock:

The National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters (NABOB), a division of the U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. (USBC), is the first trade organization representing the interests of African American owners of radio and television stations across the country. Founded in 1976 by a small group of African American broadcasters, NABOB is an important industry voice, working to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the broadcast industry. As of July 1, 2023, we have merged into USBC to increase our ability to advocate for Black entrepreneurs in the media industry. USBC provides committed, visionary leadership, and advocacy in the realization of economic empowerment. Through the creation of resources and initiatives, USBC supports a network of African American Chambers of Commerce and business organizations in their work of developing and growing Black enterprises.

The purpose of this letter is to express our concern regarding the removal of AM radio from some electric vehicles, and to request your support for legislation designed to remedy this problem. This is a matter that NABOB and several other industry organizations have been educating members of Congress about for the past several months, and we have generated an incredible amount of bipartisan support. As a result, Senator Ed Markey and Senator Ted Cruz have introduced the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act, S. 1669, which we hope you will consider co-sponsoring.

The issue we urge you to help us address is that eight of the top automobile manufacturers have announced that they have already removed, or will remove, AM radio broadcast from their electric vehicles (EVs). This represents a huge setback for AM radio stations serving the needs of the African American community, as AM radio is a crucial medium for delivering content that is culturally relevant and often missing from other formats. More broadly, the removal of AM radio from electric vehicles would be a step backward in broadcasters' efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity in media. It would reinforce the dominance of mainstream media outlets and limit the diversity of voices and perspectives that are heard.

These actions are deeply concerning to NABOB and USBC. African Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population, yet we own fewer than 2% of the commercial radio stations

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operating in this country. African Americans own 220 radio stations, of which 103 are AM. Therefore, nearly half of the radio stations owned by African Americans could be severely harmed if AM radios are removed from EVs. Given the already minimal level of Black ownership of broadcast stations, a threat that might cause the loss of existing Black ownership is very serious.

According to a recent report from Nielsen, over 80 million people in the United States listen to AM radio each month. Additionally, many AM radio stations are locally owned and operated, so they have a vested interest in covering stories that address the unique cultural and local needs of the communities they serve. African American have a limited number of media outlets that cater to their specific needs, and AM radio helps to fill that gap by providing a platform for locally produced content that is relevant to their audience. For decades, local Black owned radio stations have provided a voice for underrepresented groups, promoted local businesses, and advocated for social justice and civil rights.

AM radio also plays a vital role in providing African American communities with religious and cultural programming, which enables them to maintain cultural connections and foster a sense of community. Furthermore, AM radio provides a critical source of local news and information for communities that may be overlooked by larger media outlets. 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. For those living in rural areas, with unreliable wireless and/or broadband connections, AM radio is widely available, always on, and accessible without subscription fees or data caps. During times of emergency and natural disasters, when power outages often cause wireless networks to fail, AM radio stations form the backbone of the emergency alert system. With the removal of AM from the dash, auto manufacturers are undermining the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) system for delivering critical public safety information.

We ask that you help us convey to auto manufacturers the importance of AM broadcast radio to African Americans across the U.S. We believe your co-sponsorship of S. 1669 would send a strong and important message to the automobile manufacturers. AM radio is a crucial resource to maintain cultural and community ties as well as an important source of local news, weather, entertainment, religious and spiritual content every single day, not just during times of emergency. We look forward to working with you to maintain AM radio in the dashboard of electric vehicles sold in America.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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Sincerely,

/s/ James L. Winston
President and CEO, NABOB Division of
USBC

/s/ Ron Busby, Sr.
President and CEO USBC