

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 29, 2008

Stephen B. Morris
Chairman, President and CEO
Arbitron Inc.
142 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019-3300

Mr. Morris,

We are writing to express concern with the planned commercial expansion of Arbitron, Inc.'s new electronic measurement service, the Portable People Meter (PPM), to eight new markets – including Chicago – on October 8, 2008. We urge you to delay the rollout until the system is accredited by the Media Research Council (MRC).

Delay is in the best interest of consumers, broadcasters, and advertisers. Experts agree that a properly implemented PPM system is more accurate than the paper and pencil diary system currently in use. However, Arbitron plans to commercialize a PPM system based on a methodology that was denied MRC accreditation and as a result, we can only conclude that it does not accurately reflect the behavior of all consumers, including minorities. As you know, failures in accuracy unrelated to the technology are not only possible, but likely, without careful execution and proper selection of participants. MRC accreditation is the only third party tool we have to judge whether or not the system is being properly implemented. And the implications of poor implementation of a new PPM system for the public interest are too serious to ignore.

We have worked as vocal advocates of media diversity and opportunities for minority broadcasters to ensure that our public discourse includes a wide variety of points of view. We share the concerns expressed by the Chairmen of the Senate Judiciary and Commerce Committees with your rollout strategy and its potential effects on media diversity. On September 19, they wrote, "If the methodology used in the unaccredited markets is underreporting listenership in certain urban or Hispanic-oriented programming, thereby distorting the market, it will harm the important broadcast policy of diversity."

As you know, the MRC's Voluntary Code of Conduct discourages ratings companies like Arbitron from discontinuing use of an accredited ratings method until a replacement method is accredited. Commercializing the PPM before resolving the methodological problems identified by the MRC threatens the utility of this voluntary system. A voluntary code of conduct is worth only as much as the pledge of those to abide by it. We urge you to do so for the good of the market's and the public's faith in the data you produce.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama
U.S. Senator



Richard Durbin
U.S. Senator