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Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Subject: Public Comment on News Distortion Complaint – MB Docket No. 25-73

To the Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission,
As a concerned citizen and advocate for media integrity, I am writing to formally address the allegations of news distortion by CBS Broadcasting Inc., licensee of WCBS, New York, NY. The claims pertain to the October 2024 *60 Minutes* interview with former Vice President Kamala Harris, in which significant editing allegedly altered the context and substance of her responses.

ISSUE: ALLEGATIONS OF DECEPTIVE EDITING

The core issue at hand is whether CBS, through its alleged deceptive editing of the Harris interview, has violated FCC policies against news distortion and whether penalties, including financial sanctions or license revocation, are warranted. Reports indicate that CBS edited a 179-word response from Ms. Harris on Israel down to just 20 words, and a 140-word answer regarding the Gaza conflict to 56 words. Such substantial reductions raise concerns about the potential misrepresentation of the interviewee's intended message. This is supported by a New York Post article (nypost.com)

RULE:

Under FCC regulations and legal precedent, news distortion is defined as the deliberate and intentional falsification or manipulation of news content. The FCC has historically taken enforcement action in cases of willful distortion, citing:

- **FCC v. WOKO, Inc., 329 U.S. 223 (1946)** – The Supreme Court upheld the FCC’s authority to deny a license renewal where a broadcaster engaged in conduct contrary to the public interest.
- **Syracuse Peace Council v. FCC, 867 F.2d 654 (D.C. Cir. 1989)** – While the Fairness Doctrine was eliminated, the FCC retained authority to penalize willful news distortion.
- **FCC’s News Distortion Policy** – As outlined in the Commission’s governing documents, “rigging or slanting the news is a most heinous act against the public interest.”

ANALYSIS:

The allegations against CBS, if proven, constitute a clear violation of these legal principles. Reports indicate that CBS reduced a 179-word response from Ms. Harris on Israel down to just 20 words, and a 140-word answer regarding the Gaza conflict to 56 words. Such substantial reductions are not routine editorial decisions but rather appear to be deliberate distortions aimed at altering public perception.

The potential consequences of allowing such actions to persist are severe:

1. **Erosion of Public Trust** – A democratic society relies on an informed public. News distortion erodes public confidence in media institutions and weakens democracy.
2. **Political Manipulation** – Selectively editing political interviews can misrepresent officials' statements, affecting elections and public policy.
3. **Precedent for Further Distortion** – If major broadcasters are not held accountable, smaller media outlets may follow suit, normalizing deceptive journalism.

PUBLIC TRUST AND MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY:

The media serves as a cornerstone of our democracy, entrusted with delivering accurate and unbiased information. Intentional distortion of news content not only breaches journalistic ethics but also undermines public trust. The Federal Communications Commission has long held that "rigging or slanting the news is a most heinous act against the public interest." This is supported by FCC governing documents (fcc.gov)

CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY: EXPANDED PENALTIES

Given the gravity of these allegations, I urge the FCC to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation. If CBS is found to have intentionally distorted the interview, I recommend the following actions:

1. **Financial Penalties** – Levy a fine of at least \$5 million against CBS to establish a deterrent against future distortions.
2. **Mandatory Public Correction** – Require CBS to air an unedited version of the interview and issue a formal apology acknowledging the distortion.
3. **License Review and Potential Revocation** – If intentional news distortion is confirmed, the FCC should consider suspending or revoking WCBS's broadcast license under *FCC v. WOKO, Inc.* as a measure to uphold journalistic integrity.
4. **Independent Audit** – Mandate an external audit of CBS's editorial processes to ensure compliance with ethical and legal broadcasting standards.

CONCLUSION

The FCC has both the authority and responsibility to investigate this matter thoroughly. The continued allowance of such manipulations threatens the fabric of our democratic society. If media organizations are permitted to distort news without consequence, the American public will be deprived of factual, unbiased reporting, leading to misinformed civic engagement and weakened governmental accountability.

I trust the FCC will act decisively to enforce its longstanding policies and ensure that news remains an instrument of truth rather than deception.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]