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**TESTIMONY OF LINDSAY CLARK, POLICY ANALYST,  
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**For the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs  
Public Hearing on Bill 17-950, the “Approval of Verizon Washington, DC Inc.’s  
Cable Television System Franchise Act of 2008”  
October 31, 2008**

Good morning Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Lindsay Clark, and I am a policy analyst with the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. DCFPI engages in research and public education on the fiscal and economic health of the District of Columbia, with a particular emphasis on policies that affect low- and moderate-income residents.

The availability of FiOS in the District of Columbia is an exciting prospect for DC residents, and is important for the District’s economic development. Bill 17-950 would grant Verizon a cable franchise agreement, which would allow them to deploy FiOS in certain areas of the District over the next 9 years. This would be a massive investment in the District’s telecommunication system that has the potential to benefit many DC residents — not only by providing residents with access to higher-quality services, but also by connecting them with good paying jobs.

Like any economic development project, the city should think about this project in the context of its workforce development needs, the jobs opportunities the project might create, and how to prepare DC residents for these opportunities. This requires an understanding of how many and what kinds of new jobs are expected to be created, and how Verizon plans to meet the District’s first Source Hiring Requirement that is part of the cable franchise agreement. It is important to have this information at the outset of the project so that an effective hiring strategy can be developed between the District and Verizon to ensure these requirements are met and that there is an adequate supply of skilled labor for Verizon to hire from.

The kinds of technical jobs that are needed to install and maintain this system can offer decent wages and benefits and often do not require advanced education. For example, when Verizon was hiring employees to deploy and install FiOS in Northern Virginia, they advertised jobs at \$570-\$1,191 a week (depending on experience) with benefits, including health insurance, a 401(k) plan, and paid vacation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Data on wages provided by DC Jobs for Justice and CWA Local 2336.

For DC residents to take advantage of these opportunities, however, they will need training. As we know, simply requiring companies to hire DC residents is often not enough to ensure residents are actually hired for jobs. Currently, the District lacks vocational programs that would prepare residents for these types of telecommunications positions. To ensure the proper vocational training programs are in place, the District could work with Verizon and the building trade union to set up training and apprenticeship programs, similar to what was done with the baseball stadium.

In short, this cable franchise agreement offers the District a unique opportunity to invest in both its telecommunication infrastructure, as well as its workforce. Moreover, in the current economic climate, it becomes even more imperative that the District's economic development priorities focus on improving residents' access to jobs with good wages and benefits.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, I am happy to answer any questions.