

**January 24, 2018**

Assistant Attorney General Makan Delrahim  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

RE: *Industry Letter to DOJ Regarding Standards, Innovation and Licensing*

Dear Assistant Attorney General Delrahim,

We write regarding your November 10, 2017 remarks addressing the role of antitrust law in the context of standard setting organizations (the “USC Speech”). We agree with your comments that interoperability standards create enormous value for consumers and fuel follow-on innovation. Our signatories, which include a broad mix of industry, academic and small business interests, also share your goal of promoting innovation and consumer welfare through robust competition. However, we write to you because we believe the novel approaches announced in the USC Speech will instead threaten US industry and consumer interests, harm US innovation, and interfere with parties’ right to contract.

Collectively, our industry signatories invest over seventy billion dollars annually in research and development. We own more than three hundred thousand patent assets, many of which are standard essential patents. The vast majority of these patents describe internally-created inventions, reflecting those more than seventy billion dollars we collectively spend on fundamental research and development every year. We employ about two million people. More than thirty-five of our industry signatories are headquartered in the US, and all of our companies do business domestically. We represent diverse industries. We are not mere implementers of standards. Rather, we contribute technologies to standards and drive research, development, investment and innovation throughout the value chain.

We are concerned that the policy approaches announced in the USC speech may undermine fundamental patent licensing obligations that our companies and our customers rely upon. As you know, when patent holders participate in standards development, they commonly commit to license patents on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory (FRAND) terms. Enforcement approaches that ignore or undermine these voluntary licensing obligations may harm competition and therefore consumers. In particular, we request that the Department consider the following:

1. SEP patent hold-up is a competition law problem that harms the economy: SEP patent hold-up is real, well documented, and harming US industry and consumers. The competition law problem of patent hold-up in violation of a FRAND undertaking, and the economic issue of a licensee disputing the fairness of licensing terms, are apples and oranges. Where FRAND commitments are violated, the patent holder asserts market power it promised to forego, to the detriment of the industry and of consumers. Similar competition law interests are not implicated when a prospective licensee disputes whether the licensing fees or other terms sought by the patent holder are fair and reasonable. To be sure, we fully support a patent holder’s right to reasonable compensation based on the value of the patented technology from those who infringe. We disagree, however, with the statement made in the USC Speech that US courts provide “no

recourse” to SEP holders that seek fair compensation for infringement of their patented inventions.

2. Innovation throughout the value chain drives the economy: Today’s complex products involve innovations throughout the value chain. We innovate and invest heavily in *both* “upstream” and “downstream” technologies. We do not agree that inventions that are contributed to standard setting activities merit more protection than downstream innovations contributed by others in the supply chain. Upstream SEP holders subject to a FRAND commitment should not receive unjust enrichment, *e.g.* royalties based on the added value of downstream innovations. In short, competition enforcers should not “pick and choose” between innovations, and should not privilege upstream patentees.

3. SSO diversity should be valued, not threatened: The diversity of industry-led standard-setting organizations is an asset that distinguishes standards development in the United States and promotes US economic growth. One aspect of that diversity is the different approaches many SSOs take to the interplay between patented inventions and standardization. While some SSOs use FRAND licensing, other significant SSOs (CableLabs, responsible for cable broadband standards that hundreds of millions of Americans use to access the internet, is one example; Bluetooth is another) have chosen royalty-free (RF) licensing models as their default option. Others, for example OASIS, a leading software industry SSO, offer both RAND and RF options. As membership organizations, SSOs continually reevaluate their choice of IPR licensing models to choose the model that works best for their members and the fields of innovation in which they want to create standards. Absent anti-competitive conduct and effect, the US government should value this diversity, and do nothing to discourage SSOs from clarifying IPR policies to provide greater transparency and predictability regarding patent licensing. We support the freedom of SSOs, such as the IEEE, to define their IPR policies in ways that provide both SEP licensors and licensees with greater clarity regarding the availability of licenses and the use of fair and reasonable royalty methodologies.

4. Enforcement of a voluntary FRAND commitment is not “compulsory licensing”: SEP licensors that voluntarily agree to participate in standards development and to commit their patents to FRAND licensing are aware that their decision has consequences, positive and negative, for their ability to enforce their patents. Specifically, some patentees may seek access to a potentially large and lucrative market for their patents from implementers of a successful standard. In exchange, and as part of this *quid pro quo*, they limit their ability to exclude implementers and agree not to seek unfair or unreasonable royalties. A patentee’s voluntary agreement to that bargain is not “compulsory licensing”. Rather, it is a common feature of collaboration between industry participants to develop standards.

We thank the Antitrust Division you lead for its engagement on these important matters. We look forward to further engagement with the Department to discuss our concerns.

Sincerely,

Aces Health

ACT | The App Association<sup>1</sup>

Adobe Systems Inc.

AirTies Wireless Networks

Apple Inc.

Audi of America, Inc.

Michael A. Carrier  
Distinguished Professor  
Rutgers Law School<sup>2</sup>

Cisco Systems, Inc.

Computer and  
Communications Industry  
Association (CCIA)<sup>3</sup>

Colorado Technology  
Consultants

Computer Ways

Concentric Sky

Continental Automotive  
Systems Inc.

Dell Inc.

Dogtown Media

Fair Standards Alliance (FSA)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ACT | The App Association represents more than 5,000 app companies and information technology firms in the mobile economy. <http://actonline.org>.

<sup>2</sup> All academic signatories sign in their individual capacities.

<sup>3</sup> CCIA Members include computer and communications companies, equipment manufacturers, software developers, service providers, re-sellers, integrators, and financial service companies. Together they employ almost one million workers and generate more than \$540 billion in annual revenue. <http://www.ccianet.org>.

<sup>4</sup> FSA represents a diverse group of more than 30 companies, including companies in the telecommunications, automotive, semiconductor and wireless industries. Together, FSA members own more than 300,000 patents, and spend more than \$100B in annual R&D. <http://www.fair-standards.org>.

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Hacksmith Labs

Happi Papi

Harman International  
Industries

Higher Learning Technologies

High Tech Inventors  
Association (HTIA)<sup>5</sup>

Hewlett Packard Enterprise  
Co.

HP, Inc.

Intel Corporation

Interknowlogy

IP2Innovate (IP2I)<sup>6</sup>

ip.access Ltd.

Jadware

Juniper Networks, Inc.

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<sup>5</sup> HTIA members collectively spent \$63B on R&D last year, own over 110,000 patents, and have nearly 500,000 employees in the United States. <https://www.hightechinventors.com>.

<sup>6</sup> IP2I is a coalition of small and large companies that create innovative products and services, and which hold many thousands of patents, along with industry groups representing dozens of additional companies. <http://ip2innovate.eu>.

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Samsung Electronics

SAP America, Inc.

SecureHIMs

SentryOne

Sequans Communications S.A.

Sierra Wireless, Inc.

Sigao Studios

Southern DNA

Stroll Health	Technology Safety Council
Telit Wireless Solutions, Inc.	The Mobile Yogi
The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) <sup>7</sup>	u-blox AG
Unbuttoned Innovation, Inc.	Volkswagen of America, Inc.
Weiner Family Studios	Wellbeyond
Your App Lady	1564B

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<sup>7</sup> SIIA is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry, representing over 700 companies owning tens of thousands of patents in a variety of industries. SIIA protects the intellectual property of member companies, and advocates a legal and regulatory environment that benefits the entire industry. <https://www.sii.net>.