

Testimony of Hakim Boubazine  
Chief Operating Officer & President of Telecommunications  
Altice USA  
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Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear at this hearing.

My name is Hakim Boubazine, and I am the Chief Operating Officer and President of Telecommunications at Altice USA.

As a New York-based company, Altice is proud to provide cable television, broadband, voice and other services to residential and business customers in 21 states, including nearly 2 million Optimum customers in Long Island, Bronx, most of Brooklyn, Westchester County, and the Greater Hudson Valley.

Since acquiring Cablevision in 2016, Altice has invested heavily in New York, more than quadrupling top broadband speeds, including now offering 1 Gig service. Altice also has been building a new Fiber to the Home (“FTTH”) network that will be even more resilient and be capable of delivering up to 10 Gbps service, and New York was our first market for FTTH.

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have supported our employees, customers and communities, including offering free broadband service to any household with a student when schools had to suddenly close and assisting people facing economic hardship to remain connected with our services. And we are giving back to our local New York communities through a \$10 million Community Relief Program which provides assistance to small businesses and community partners in their recovery. We understand the importance of connectivity services, especially during this unprecedented time when work and learning is happening remotely for so many people

I want to say from the outset that we take very seriously the need to be prepared for any circumstance and to respond quickly in the face of challenges. Within the past two weeks, we were once again tested by forces of nature when Tropical Storm Isaias hit the Northeast, one of the worst storms in recent years. Unlike previous severe weather events, the recovery efforts for this storm had to occur with the residual impacts of the pandemic on workforce morale and readiness. I appreciate the tireless efforts of several thousand Altice team members who worked to ensure that services impacted by the storm were restored as quickly as possible.

Tropical Storm Isaias caused significant damage from strong winds and downed trees that took down utility lines and left behind a significant amount of debris. As is typically the case, our recovery efforts are integrally linked to the restoration activity and timeline of the utilities, and restoration is an iterative process. In this recent storm, the vast majority of our customers once again lost our services due to the loss of commercial power. As commercial power was restored, the majority of our customers came back online. Regardless, nearly 1,000 field repair personnel in New York State worked around the clock to repair damage and restore Optimum

services. At the height of the storm impact on August 4, more than 400,000 Altice customers in New York State were offline. By August 9<sup>th</sup>, nearly 80 percent of New York Optimum customers were back online, with the vast majority of those service restorations attributed to commercial power returning. On the morning of August 18<sup>th</sup>, we declared network operations to be back to normal, with remaining issues being primarily customer-premise related and needing follow up service visits.

Our efforts to prepare for the storm began July 29<sup>th</sup>, based on national weather reports of the likely path of the storm. We activated our processes reflected in our Severe Weather Preparedness Plan, which outlines protocols for each Altice business unit to prepare for and respond to severe weather events appropriately. The Plan's objectives are to protect employees and customers, minimize outages and restore service to customers as soon as possible. This plan, combined with around the clock efforts of our repair teams, allowed us to begin immediately addressing the various causes of our outages.

We believe that an important part of any recovery plan is effective communication with our customers as well with key stakeholders, including other utilities and government officials. Early during the Tropical Storm, there were two IT system issues that occurred mainly due to the surge of usage that created challenges for our customers to reach us via phone (IVR) and to secure information on outage status or report service issues by logging into their Optimum.net account. We addressed those issues as quickly as possible, but understand the frustration felt by our customers; we apologize for the inconvenience, as this is certainly not the experience we designed for our customers.

As mentioned, storm recovery efforts are an iterative process and require coordination. Altice coordinates with each electric utility to ensure best practices and safety protocols on service restorations. As our field teams are on the ground to assess network impacts, we shared data and compared outage information with the relevant utilities. Given the central role of commercial power to Optimum service restoration, these communications were used to deploy Altice field service personnel after power crews restored power to customer homes.

To the extent there are additional coordinating points, including Offices of Emergency Management, we are committed to ensuring we have an appropriate presence and communication with these stakeholders to ensure timely sharing of information and efficient restoration efforts. As part of our effort to be transparent about our restoration efforts, we initiated community level reports by county to inform public officials about service status.

As a sign of our commitment to our customers, Altice will proactively provide credits for loss of our service as a result of the storm's impact on our network. These credits will exceed our regulatory obligations in that we will provide credits for all services, not just video service. We have posted a message about the proactive credit and emailed all impacted customers to advise that the credit will be applied. If any customer has a question about the credit, we will handle individual questions directly.

Given the recent timing of the Storm, our review of the storm impact and the specific recovery efforts has not yet been completed. Once the review is complete, we will incorporate any learnings to further refine our future response plans, consistent with our goal to provide the best customer experience in the industry. And we will of course cooperate fully with the Public Service Commission in its review of the storm recovery efforts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this testimony, and look forward to your questions.