

Public Comment Submission- 10/21/2026

Docket: HHS-OASH-2026-0397 (Request for Information: Health Effects of Radiofrequency Radiation)

Commenter: Courtney Gilardi, on behalf of the Shacktown Neighborhood and Injured Communities

Subject: Human Relocation, Severe Lived Traumas, and the Critical Accountability Void Under the 1996 FCC Exposure Framework

1. Introduction

My name is Courtney Gilardi. I am a mother, a previous teacher, a resident of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and an accidental public health advocate. I am writing directly to express my profound gratitude to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#) and Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for opening this inquiry. For years, our families have been suffering, and this docket is the first time an agency has truly opened its doors to look at the real biological reality on wireless radiation.

I am writing with a desperate sense of urgency. I am not here to talk about abstract academic modeling, the New Hampshire Commission Report, the Environmental Nurses working to educate and protect us from wireless harm or how the City of Boston has asked the FCC to take action on this issue now. I am speaking for the **Shacktown neighborhood in Pittsfield**, our families and the **multiple medically diagnosed residents** whose lives were completely shattered when a 115-foot commercial cell tower was placed 200 to 400 feet from our homes.

Because of the exposure from RF emission from this infrastructure, people in our community are currently forced to live out of their cars, in unheated trailers, and in tents. We have beautiful homes that we worked our entire lives to afford, yet they have been rendered entirely uninhabitable. We are literally sick to death inside them. We are begging HHS to step in because our lives and health are being treated as acceptable losses—the mere "cost of doing business"—to ensure a uniform corporate wireless network. I lost my health, my children lost their health, and my neighbors lost their health—some have even lost their lives. We lost our neighborhood, the only home my children have ever known, and I have lost the last six years of their childhood to trying to right this wrong. With your help, we can, and we can prevent this from happening to others.

2. Background

This comment targets the severe regulatory failures of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) 1996 exposure standards. These antiquated limits are entirely unprotective and non-biologically safe. They are based on a thermal-only calculation designed to measure just **six minutes of exposure** to prevent a piece of dummy tissue from heating up. They were never designed to evaluate what happens when human beings, developing children, and pregnant women have to live 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in the perpetual shadow of a commercial wireless facility.

When our neighborhood fell ill, the [Pittsfield Board of Health](#) stepped up, conducted a historic nine-month investigation, and issued an emergency cease-and-desist order after declaring the tower a public nuisance and cause of sickness. Yet, as documented in [iBerkshires](#) and [The Berkshire Eagle](#), our legal recourse was ultimately stripped away in July 2026 when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that Section 332 of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 completely preempts local health boards from protecting their citizens if a tower complies with FCC's antiquated, thermal only guidelines.

3. Analysis and Evidence

The Deception of "Improved Infrastructure"

The most frustrating aspect of our displacement is that our neighborhood had perfectly stable, functional cell service long before the South Street tower went up in August 2020. For 14 years, we could see a macro cell tower in the distance. It was far enough away that we lived in harmony with technology. We are not anti-technology; we are pro-human, pro-health, pro-safety. Our goal is to be "connected and protected" and we believe with innovative technology, safer siting laws and better education around RF exposure, we can have win-win solutions for all. A cell tower at a safe distance never harmed us. Yet, 24/7 exposure from a high-power array just 400 feet from our bedrooms made us violently ill.

Clinically Documented Harm and Medical Consensus

Our symptoms are fully documented by physicians, environmental medical specialists, and pediatricians. When the tower was switched on, children in our neighborhood began sleeping with "vomit buckets" by their beds. Our collective diagnoses of injury due to non-ionizing radiation and reported symptoms include:

- Chronic, piercing headaches and severe neurological vertigo
- Nausea, vomiting, and skin rashes
- Tinnitus, cognitive confusion, and sudden memory gaps
- Severe cardiac palpitations and profound sleep deprivation

Our physicians explicitly presented us with the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** position statements on wireless harms, which warn that children's thinner skulls and developing brains absorb this radiation much more deeply. Our doctors gave us clear medical directives: *for the sake of your health, you must relocate*. When we spent

time away from the tower our symptoms resolved. When we came back home, they returned. We took video of us vomiting after spending time at home. This was no way to live. We were forced to choose between our homes and our health. Not everyone could afford to move, get a loan for a new house, or afford somewhere else to go. Many of us were forced to stay and be sick in our previously safe houses, which were meant to be sanctuary. Prolonged, constant exposure has now left us with a permanent disability.

A Local Government Silenced by Federal Preemption

Our plight is backed by an undeniable consensus of local and state leaders who have tried to help us, only to be stone-walled by the FCC's protective shield:

- **The Pittsfield Board of Health and the Pittsfield City Council under Mayor/ Council President Peter Marchetti** have written desperate pleas to the legislature, begging them to take action on wireless environmental hazards, only to be completely ignored.
- The **Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB)** and multiple medical advocacy groups filed powerful amicus briefs certifying that wireless radiation at this proximity constitutes a classified nuisance, hazard, toxin, and carcinogen.
- The widespread reality of our suffering was validated by **Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey**, who issued an official state proclamation designating *Invisible Disabilities and Illnesses Week*. The City of Pittsfield similarly issued *Global EHS Day Proclamations*.

Through the Global EHS Day forums we hosted, we listened to the heartbreaking stories of identical communities across America. Everyone on the ground agrees this is a public health emergency. The science supporting our injuries is completely compiled across the extensive public records on the [Environmental Health Trust Pittsfield Case Registry](#), which links hundreds of independent, peer-reviewed laboratory studies proving non-thermal biological harm, DNA damage, and blood-brain barrier permeability.

4. Recommendations to HHS

To end this nightmare and ensure no other American neighborhood faces the destruction of Shacktown, I urge HHS to act immediately on the following:

1. **Acknowledge Lived Reality Over 1996 Dogma:** Formally state that compliance with 1996 FCC thermal guidelines does *not* equal safety, and that non-thermal biological damage is occurring at levels far below these limits.
2. **Establish Protective Residential Setbacks:** Recommend a mandatory federal safety setback of at least 500 meters (approx. 1,600 feet) to keep commercial towers away from homes, schools, and vulnerable populations.
3. **Prioritize Clinical Education:** Direct federal funding to educate general practitioners, pediatricians, and frontline clinicians on how to recognize, diagnose, and treat RF-EMF radiation sickness and electromagnetic hypersensitivity. We must remove the stigma

and shame surrounding this- the jokes and the insults that prevent people from speaking up.

4. **Demand an Amendment to the TCA:** Issue a formal administrative finding to Congress stating that Section 332 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 creates an unconstitutional threat to public health and safety by stripping local boards of health of their traditional police powers to protect sick and injured citizens.
6. **Restore Local Siting and Democracy Rights:** Give the explicit right back to every local community to deny a cell tower permit based on its proximity to homes, parks, and schools. Currently, health and environmental impacts are explicitly forbidden from being considered during siting. This legal muzzle ties the hands of our local nurses, physicians, and allied health professionals who have sworn a sacred oath to protect safety and "first do no harm." Wireless companies use this loophole to bully municipalities, creating intense fear of bankrupting lawsuits if a local town dares to deny a permit based on human health. This structural silencing must be remedied immediately.
7. **Establish a Legal and Financial Remedy:** For **2,269 days**, our neighborhood has asked one burning question: *Who is responsible when people are injured and their lives are upended by hazardous emissions from cell towers?* To this day, after taking this to the highest court in Massachusetts, the answer is, the FCC is. They are not a health and safety agency. You, as the HHS are. You are charged with taking action and protecting health and human life and safety. They are charged with rolling out wireless networks when we could have safe copper or fiber optics that allows us to hardwire our technology instead, keeping us free from toxic RF EMF exposures. Wireless radiation is an invisible toxin. But just like Radon, PCBs, PFAS, carbon monoxide, and asbestos before it, being invisible does not make it any less serious, life-altering, or toxic. It is profoundly irresponsible to roll out infrastructure without strict safeguards, independent safety checks, a formal federal system to report environmental harm, and a legal mechanism for victims to be made whole after sustaining catastrophic injuries.

5. Conclusion & The Path to Accountability

Thank you, HHS, for finally listening. It cannot be that the law of the United States protects corporate wireless networks while leaving its own citizens to sleep in tents, cars, and unheated trailers because a cell tower near their homes make them physically sick.

Today, we look to HHS for this answer. We stand ready to provide you with any additional documentation, scientific logs, and medical records required to put a face to wireless harm. We are not invisible, even though radiofrequency is. Health and safety must come first. Please give this crisis the federal resources, attention, and immediate

solutions it deserves to end the suffering and ensure there is never another neighborhood like Shacktown.

With gratitude,

Courtney Gilardi,

Pittsfield, Massachusetts