

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 13, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to share our thoughts on the impact of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposed repeal of net neutrality protections on our nation's libraries and urge the abandonment of this proposal.

Protecting the open Internet is essential to our citizens and our democracy. Our nation's 120,000 libraries depend on equitable and robust access to the Internet to provide a wide range of vital services to meet the needs of their respective communities. This is especially true in rural areas, where more than 83 percent of libraries report they serve as their community's only provider of free Internet and computing services.

Millions of Americans who do not have broadband access at home depend on the availability of Internet access at their local libraries. From helping with homework to searching for work and starting a small business to applying for jobs and government assistance and paying taxes—people come to libraries to fulfill essential functions of daily life.

America's libraries also collect, create, provide access to, and disseminate essential information to the public over the Internet. The digital collections of the Library of Congress, National Library of Medicine, college and university libraries, and public libraries provide a vast amount of information-based services, ranging from video tutorials to oral histories of our country's founding to downloads of large research datasets.

A world in which this information may be limited to the Internet's "slow lanes" while other content generated by large corporations who can pay for preferential treatment undermines a central tenet of a democratic society. By and large, our public institutions cannot afford to pay for prioritized Internet access. Those who can pay will likely have their uses of the Internet prioritized ahead of education and other public interests, with significant negative consequences to communities across the nation.

Furthermore, we have concerns about the process the FCC has used in its actions to repeal these critical protections. The FCC has not satisfactorily responded to concerns about the potentially thousands of fake public comments submitted on its proposal. Nor has the FCC seriously investigated the source of the comments. Ignoring glaring concerns about the public record and charging ahead with a plan to end net neutrality seriously endangers the public trust.

We ask that the FCC instead go back to the drawing board and ensure that it takes no actions that will harm our public libraries, schools, and institutions of higher education and the citizens they serve. The FCC should be working to ensure that those most in need are able to access the Internet, not undermining that goal.

Thank you for your timely consideration of these vital concerns.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Patrick Leahy

Kirsten Gillibrand

Shirley

Ron Wyden

Edward J. Markey

Barack Obama

Elizabeth Warren

Anthony Brown

Tommy Baldwin

Richard Blumenthal

Mazie Hironaka