

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 12, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Chairman Pai:

As members of the Senate Commerce Committee and strong supporters of an open internet, we write to express our opposition to the recently released draft order to eliminate net neutrality protections. Net neutrality is critical to the competitiveness of our economy and the health of small businesses and startups. The rules in place today level the playing field for entrepreneurs and protect the internet as a place that allows small businesses to succeed. Your order to repeal these rules would take us in the wrong direction.

Both Minnesota and Michigan are home to hundreds of thousands of small businesses. One way in which the draft order will hurt small business entrepreneurship and innovation is by limiting access to the open internet. A truly open internet encourages economic growth and provides opportunities for businesses to reach new markets, drive innovation, and create jobs. With unrestricted access to the internet, entrepreneurs can focus their resources on growing a business rather than paying for equal footing to compete online. Small businesses are the engines of job creation, responsible for an estimated 63 percent of net new jobs from 2010 to 2016. Without strong net neutrality protections small businesses and startups will face new barriers to compete in the online marketplace.

The landmark 2015 Open Internet Order effectively prevents major internet service providers from blocking, slowing, and prioritizing web traffic for their own financial gain. Your proposal not only directly eliminates these protections but also reclassifies broadband as an information service, jeopardizing the FCC's authority to keep internet service providers (ISPs) in check. These protections are crucial to the continued success of small businesses and startups competing online.

The only open internet provisions your proposal salvages are requirements for service providers to disclose their internet traffic policies. However, the benefits of transparency rules are negated when tied to a repeal of essential net neutrality protections. If approved, your order will still result in ISPs having the power to interfere with web traffic as they please, putting small businesses, startups, and everyday users at a significant disadvantage.


The FCC should not be pursuing policies that will slow and degrade internet access when many Americans, particularly in rural areas, still lack access to high-speed broadband entirely. We need to focus our efforts on closing the digital divide rather than creating an online environment

in which the success of small businesses and consumers is at the mercy of large ISPs who are not bound to the doctrine of a free and open internet.

American consumers, entrepreneurs, and innovators rely on net neutrality. As we face an increasingly global and interconnected economy, it is critical that the internet remains a hub of entrepreneurship, creativity, and fair competition. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


Gary C. Peters
United States Senator