

December 7, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Pai,

We urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to protect net neutrality. The people of Montana, our students and patrons, depend upon the Internet. The rural nature and large distances in our state can make economic development and partaking of basic services such as health care challenging. Fast and open Internet makes it possible for people in places like Jordan, Terry, and Plentywood to work from home, to access education opportunities from across the state and the country, and to enjoy equitable online services such as those that are used by our big city residents in Missoula, Bozeman, and Billings. It even helps them access health care by giving residents the ability to communicate with doctors in Billings or elsewhere via telemedicine systems. Many of them use it to stay connected to family and friends in other parts of the country and world, a critical need to reduce social isolation.

Protecting net neutrality is crucial to ensuring that the Internet remains a central driver of economic opportunity, job creation, education, health care and social connections for Montanans. The principles of net neutrality – that all data on the Internet should be treated equally, and Internet service providers (ISPs) should not discriminate or provide preference to any data, regardless of its source, content, or destination – are the foundation that has made the Internet the engine of opportunity it is today. The continuation of net neutrality is essential to the continued growth of the state.

Montana is a large state geographically, but it is small population wise. As a result, many consumers are limited in their choices. They have one Internet provider and are not as free to choose the service that provides what they require. This makes net neutrality even more critical to their well-being as they are not able to turn to a competitor for Internet service.

Montana's libraries collect, create, and disseminate information to the public over the Internet. We also ensure our users can access the Internet and create and distribute their own digital content and applications. If net neutrality were to go away, this essential service would be threatened. Strong, enforceable net neutrality rules are critical to our communities, and to our libraries.

A world in which libraries and other noncommercial enterprises are limited to the Internet's "slow lanes" while commercial services such as HD movies can obtain preferential treatment undermines a central priority for a democratic society. Every citizen should be able to inform and educate themselves and each other. The free flow of information on the Internet is critical to a healthy democracy.

Sincerely,

Members of the Network Advisory Council

Pamela Benjamin, Bozeman	Bruce Newell, Montana State Library Commission Chair
Connie Behe, Kalispell	Eva English, Harlem
Mary Kay Bullard, Colstrip	Barry Brown, Missoula
Joanne Didrikson, Helena	Matt Beckstrom, Helena
Elizabeth Jonkel, Missoula	KellyAnne Terry, Lewistown
Hannah McKelvey, Bozeman	Dana Carmichael, Whitefish

Each of these individuals serves on the Montana State Library Network Advisory Council representing librarians and libraries from around the state. All types of libraries are represented - academic, school, and public. All sizes of libraries are also represented.

Members of TRAILS (Treasure State Academic Information & Library Services)

Aaniih Nakoda Community College - Eva English	Blackfeet Community College - Aaron LaFromboise
Carroll College - Christian Frazza	Chief Dull Knife College - Jerusha Shipstead
Dawson Community College - Vacant	Flathead Valley Community College - Susan Matter
Fort Peck Community College - Anita Scheetz	Little Big Horn College - Tim Bernardis
Miles Community College - George Dickie	Montana Bible College - Jessica Carlson
Montana State University – Billings - Darlene Hert	Montana State University – Bozeman – Kenning Arlitsch
Montana State University - Great Falls College - Laura Wight	Montana State University – Northern - Vicki Gist
Rocky Mountain College - Bobbi Otte	Salish Kootenai College - Fred Noel
Stone Child College - Joy Bridwell	University of Montana - Helena College – Della Dubbe
William J. Jameson Law Library (UM - Missoula) - Stacey Gordon	University of Montana – Missoula - Shali Zhang
University of Montana - Montana Tech – Scott Juskiewicz	University of Montana – Western -Anne Kish
University of Providence - Oliver Pflug	Yellowstone Christian College - Vacant

CC: Senator Steve Daines
Senator Jon Tester
Representative Greg Gianforte