

December 11, 2017

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: Oppose the FCC's Plan to Abandon Network Neutrality (WC Docket No. 17-108)**

Dear Senator Schumer,

We write on behalf of The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, the Brooklyn Public Library, and Queens Library to express our strong support for the principles of "net neutrality." We respectfully ask you to publicly oppose the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) proposal to abandon existing net neutrality rules based on Title II of the Communications Act.

As announced on November 21, 2017, Chairman Pai has presented a draft order to abandon the net neutrality rules promulgated by the FCC in 2015. Net neutrality is the principle that Internet service providers (ISPs) should treat all traffic on their public networks the same, regardless of the source. The vote to adopt this proposal to roll back these rules has been scheduled for the FCC's Open Meeting on December 14, 2017. This draft order, if adopted, could have a significant adverse effect on how information flows over the public Internet. The Internet serves as an important and open platform for the free exchange of ideas. Abandoning net neutrality rules threatens the openness of the Internet by incentivizing ISPs to interfere with how their customers use the Internet. Preserving the free flow of information over the public Internet and equitable access for all people is critical to the social, cultural, educational and economic well-being of our nation.

We are New York City's three public library systems. Combined, we represent the largest public library network in the nation, operating 216 local library branches throughout the city and four research libraries in Manhattan. Our users rely on our libraries to access books, periodicals, electronic databases, mobile technology, archives and research materials for free. We also offer thousands of free educational, recreational and cultural programs designed to improve the lives of our patrons. We bridge the digital divide by providing free Internet access to millions of New Yorkers so they can participate in the information revolution.

**The FCC's Draft Order Threatens Intellectual Freedom**

New York City's libraries believe that all citizens have the right to seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. An open Internet connects people of diverse geography, backgrounds, political views or ideologies without regard for the financial resources of the content provider. This openness, the ability to hear and express diverse viewpoints, is

fundamental to the free exchange of ideas and is a bedrock principle of libraries and our democracy.

Without net neutrality rules based in Title II, commercial ISPs will have an incentive to preference some speech over others based solely on the financial resources of the speaker. ISPs would have the ability to decide which viewpoints or sources of content should be prioritized over others. Today, individuals and small groups can produce rich audio and video resources, and can distribute those resources directly to users. Also, users with disabilities who require captioning or video description support need access to bandwidth-intensive services. Without net neutrality, these resources could be relegated to second-class delivery, constraining the intellectual freedom championed by libraries and fostered by an open Internet.

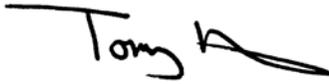
### **Access to the Collections of New York City's Libraries Threatened by the FCC's Draft Order**

We are deeply concerned that by abandoning the existing net neutrality rules based on Title II of the Communications Act, public broadband providers will have financial incentives to interfere with the openness of the Internet. These financial incentives will allow ISPs to grant favorable transmission to their affiliated content providers or other content providers that pay for priority delivery of their content to end users. Granting favorable transmission could lead to an Internet that is bifurcated between content that is delivered quickly and content that is delivered slowly.

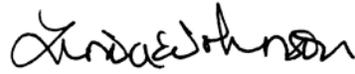
In this scenario, our users will be frustrated when they try to access the expansive collections of our libraries. To avoid the "slow lane" that the FCC's rollback of net neutrality will produce, New York City's libraries may need to pay broadband providers an extra fee so our content can be delivered on the same terms as commercial content providers. Already, we move large amounts of audio and video across the Internet from cloud servers to playback stations in our reading rooms and to users remotely accessing our collections. Because this is a bandwidth-intensive activity, forcing the transmission into the "slow lane" will frustrate our ability to serve our users. As we increase our digital collections, the costs to pay for prioritized delivery of content to our users would increase significantly over time.

We urge you to support and protect the principles of net neutrality enshrined in the FCC's 2015 Open Internet Order and oppose Chairman Pai's attempt to overturn those protections. If the FCC votes to abandon net neutrality rules on December 14th, then ISPs will be able to fundamentally change how we access information. Certain websites would potentially be censored and users will encounter information on an uneven basis, exposing them to a narrow set of viewpoints. Libraries unable to pay for prioritized delivery will have their collections relegated to second-class status. An open and free Internet is essential to a free and informed society of citizens.

Yours,



Anthony W. Marx  
President & CEO  
The New York Public Library



Linda E. Johnson  
President & CEO  
Brooklyn Public Library



Dennis M. Walcott  
President & CEO  
Queens Library

