I support retaining and enforcing strong net neutrality rules backed by Title II, which ensure that Internet Service Providers cannot discriminate in favor of or against Internet content or services. As the co-owner of a small business in New Jersey, I know that a free and open internet has been essential to the success and well-being of our company. From handling our database of information on DropBox or hosting our website on Wordpress, we rely on our robust broadband service to keep our learning center running smoothly. If Title II and net neutrality rules were repealed, ISPs such as Comcast and Verizon would be able to extort high fees from companies like ours to make our website available to existing and potential customers or charge online companies such as DropBox high fees to work in the “fast lane,” all costs that would be fronted by our company and likely make us financially unviable.

In the twenty-first century, internet service is certainly not a luxury or a privilege. It is instead fundamental and essential to the needs of being a modern citizen, from the homework that requires online resources that my brother does and daily online communication among my coworkers, friends, and family to the dissemination and consumption of news and current events. Many services, such as banking or applying for jobs, are increasingly only available online, and online services are a lifeline to those in remote areas or to those with constraints on their ability to travel. With this in mind, I, and most Americans, purchase broadband Internet access in order to buy a reliable “ramp to the Internet,” rather than “information services,” such as email, cloud storage, and other proprietary services. Indeed, all advertisements from Comcast and Frontier in my city emphasize the speeds of each Internet offering; information services have never been a factor when I am selecting an Internet plan.

To say that I “select” an Internet plan is also a bit of a false statement, seeing as I have limited options in my city. In every place I’ve lived, I’ve had one primary ISP that dominated the market and who dictate the pricing structure available. Frontier, the only competitor to Comcast in the New Haven area, has a strong reputation for unreliable internet and is seen as a paltry counterpart without many of the offerings that Comcast does. That is what makes repealing the net neutrality rules so concerning — given the near monopoly that Comcast has on the local market, any discriminatory practices they could carry out would be highly effective, since I have no realistic alternative to turn to. The lack of genuine free market competition in the ISP industry has held the United States from accessing and receiving high-quality internet services readily available in other countries with more open ISP markets. Repeating Title II would only ensure this state of affairs becomes worse, not better.

Much like the telephone revolutionized the twentieth century, so too has Internet service irrevocably changed the twenty-first century. Broadband ISPs hold within their power the ability to damage the freedom promised to Americans in the Constitution and by the government, and the FCC is obligated within its mission to oversee the market for broadband Internet access. To do otherwise would be to fail its own point of existence.