To Whom It May Concern,

The state of the internet is at a critical tipping point. Since the 1970s the internet has connected the people of the United States across great distances, across state lines, across party lines, across nationalities. The internet is the greatest source of information known to us and is currently one of mankind’s greatest achievements. It is absurd that this proposal is titled “Restoring Internet Freedom” when it has the potential to greatly limit the freedom of ordinary American citizens.

When the first packet switching networks came online they were run mainly by government, public, and education institutions. Now the majority of Americans receive their internet service through privately owned companies; Comcast, AT&T, Verizon, Charter, CenturyLink. A very small number of ISPs provide service to the vast majority of Americans. Most Americans only have one or two ISPs to choose from and from those choices only one typically provides fast and reliable internet.

We should expect competition in the internet provider space but the current titans of the industry make it extremely difficult for others to compete. Google, one of the largest software companies in the world said in October 2016 that they were pausing their fiber rollout to new cities. Why they stopped is not stated specifically but one of the reasons may be because rolling out new fiber is expensive. When Google Fiber started rolling out the largest ISPs instantly started increasing their speeds and services. This shows that competition is good. But Google stopped competing because it didn’t make much sense, most of the country is already connected. It is just that those connections are controlled by a small number of large and powerful companies.

The reason it is important to designate ISPs as common carriers under Title II is because it forces ISPs to treat all traffic equally. Why should ISPs not treat all traffic equally? Should ISPs be able to discriminate? It is easy to see all the ways ISPs could stifle competition by being able to control the traffic that goes over networks but I will give a specific example. Comcast provides internet under their Xfinity brand, but they also own NBCUniversal. One of the largest media companies in America. Netflix is one of the largest streaming and video on demand providers. Netflix relies on the network connections already laid out by Comcast and other companies. If Comcast wanted to create their own video on demand service they would have to compete with Netflix. However, since they control the network connections they could avoid competing with Netflix by tampering with their traffic to Netflix’s customers. One of the only ways Netflix could fight this would be to deploy their own lines to their customers. But as seen with Google this solution is not feasible.

I do not even need to make up hypotheticals. In 2005 Comcast started blocking peer-to-peer network traffic. In 2007 investigations from the Associated Press and the Electronic Frontier Foundation showed that Comcast was doing this. Comcast never informed its customers. If customers knew about this they would have the opportunity to switch to a different provider. But as stated before most Americans do not have a choice in who they get service from.

The largest ISPs have a lot of power and control over the state of the internet today. They have the power to wrest the current freedom that ordinary Americans have when it comes to the internet. The only other player that the American people could look towards is the federal government. The government has the ability to protect the American people from the tyranny of the largest ISPs. The American people have spoken once before. Back in 2012, Title II regulations were placed on ISPs because the American people wanted them. They saw the state that the internet was in, they also saw where it was headed. They wanted their freedoms and the government provided them. Now the American people are speaking again, and they are saying the same thing they said in 2012. We want these regulations, we do not want traffic discrimination, we want net neutrality.

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