

Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of )  
 )  
Restoring Internet Freedom ) WC Docket No. 17-108

**Reply Comments of Metropolitan Libraries of Ohio**

The Metropolitan Libraries of Ohio (MLO), along with our public library peers across the country, rely on a free and open internet to serve our customers each day and foster intellectual freedom. The MLO do this by ensuring our customers can access the information, resources, and research they need to be an informed and educated citizenry.

Access to information is a pillar of our country's democratic principles. As such, the MLO support the American Library Association, the American Association of Law Libraries, and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies and agrees with their respective comments in this proceeding.<sup>1</sup>

The Metropolitan Libraries of Ohio fully agree with the aforementioned associations in their assessment of the negative impact to public libraries and our customers that will result from significant changes to net neutrality regulations. Specifically, we agree that no changes to the current rules governing net neutrality are required. Changes to these rules will result in changes to the fundamental rights of free speech and the democratic values Americans cherish.

The MLO take pride in serving customers in rural, urban, and suburban communities throughout the state of Ohio. In many circumstances, the library is the only point of access for those without technology or internet services, and we continue to play a key role in helping to ensure that children in these communities have access to online educational resources. Many customers, especially those in low-income neighborhoods, rely heavily on our libraries for access to the internet via our public computers, or through the free wireless service we provide

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<sup>1</sup> Comments of the American Library Association, the American Association of Law Libraries and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, Docket 17-108.

at each location. This readily available broadband access ensures that our customers can easily find information, create content, and otherwise have indiscriminate opportunities to utilize a free and open internet.

Further, to ensure all our customers can utilize the internet, our librarians offer classes and assistance to teach the basic skills necessary to use the internet. Without net neutrality regulations in place, it becomes inherently more difficult and confusing for customers to understand how to connect to and navigate the internet if content becomes prioritized or even blocked.

Our librarians also specialize in helping customers utilize the internet for critical life skills, such as searching for employment opportunities, government resources, unbiased research, and educational information. They assist customers with submitting job applications and applying for government benefits, which is often only possible through electronic format via internet connection. It is especially important to reiterate the role of public libraries in enabling customers to access government forms and services through our broadband network. Without this unfettered access, these documents could become unobtainable for many of our customers.

Additionally, the MLO are highly concerned that many applications and programs we provide to customers will be relegated to the internet slow lane or even made inaccessible due to our inability to pay the fees that may become required for faster broadband. For example, the MLO currently offer programs such as Overdrive and Hoopla, both of which provide free movie content to customers. These could easily become difficult to access compared to services such as Netflix, which have the ability to pay for search prioritization and delivery speed. A pay-to-play approach will also limit a library's ability to deliver access to neutral research or other information without paying ISP access charges, especially for competing services or unbiased news articles.

We strongly agree with the library trade associations that the FCC must not eliminate the current rules that ban internet traffic blocking, degrading content and slowing speed of access to content. Additionally, we agree that paid prioritization will limit libraries ability to purchase and offer the fastest transmission and fullest content should the rules be removed.

Public libraries are one of the most democratic institutions in our country, and the democratic principles upon which public libraries were established – to protect free speech and the equitable dissemination of information for the purpose of intellectual freedom – will be severely jeopardized if net neutrality rules are revoked or diminished.

Respectfully submitted,

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