August 29, 2017

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am very much opposed to the FCC's proposed reclassification of broadband Internet access service as an information service. I believe that it should remain classified as a telecommunications service and retain the associated regulatory controls that would preserve net neutrality.

I have internet access, including voice-over-IP phone service, through an ISP. In addition to making phone calls, I use the internet multiple times per day to connect to a variety of websites around the country. The ability to connect to another site via modern day connections is really no different than the use of a dial up modem through a telephone line in prior decades. The specification of a website URL as an alias for an IP address does not change the inherent function of the internet provided by broadband service, which is to transmit data to and from Internet endpoints. Even though ISPs may also provide other services such as email or cloud storage, I use other providers of these services – this is not the reason that I contract with my ISP.

I do not believe that changing the net neutrality rules will benefit consumers in any way. In our area, we only have 2 options for internet access and the prices are comparable. Eliminating regulation by classifying ISP as information service providers is likely to result in a reduction of our broadband speeds (which are already poor) and/or an increase in the price we must pay to obtain reasonable broadband service.

As a health care professional, I am especially concerned about the impact that the proposed re-classification could have on health care delivery and costs. Significant amounts of money have been invested in the infrastructure for digital health, including incentives for adoption of electronic health records and an impetus to engage patients in their health care using patient portals and other information technology. Images such as radiologic studies require significant bandwidth for transmission and often need to be communicated rapidly. Increasing costs for preferred access to high-speed networks will likely increase costs to health care or reduce access to the internet by patients. Both of these outcomes seem very counter-productive.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to leave broadband Internet access as a telecommunications service and preserve net neutrality.

Sincerely,

Laura J. Fochtmann, MD