



The Honorable Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. S.W.
Washington D.C. 20544

Re: Addendum to Comment for WC Docket 17-108

**COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY BOARD- STORIES FROM
THE SEATTLE COMMUNITY REGARDING THE INTERNET FREEDOM
PROPOSAL**

City of Seattle's Community Technology Advisory Board (CTAB) submitted a comment to the FCC voicing strong support for net neutrality and the maintenance of broadband Internet as a telecommunications service. The comment highlights the impact that a reclassification of broadband Internet could have on Seattle's various economic sectors, education and nonprofit providers, and underserved residents.

As part of advocacy efforts the board attempted to engage with citizens to better understand the importance of uncensored, open and a neutral Internet for the Seattle community. These efforts mainly involved connecting with the citizens through the board's social media channels to understand the Internet usage and participation patterns amongst the Seattle based startups, businesses, individuals and social sector organizations.

The stories speak as follows-

Eugene P Weltzer II is an *individual* who *moderately* depends on the Internet. Eugene primarily uses the Internet to "*research accurate information for others. Be a middle advocate for distressed and vulnerable individuals. Be a remote contact for family and friends in local emergencies.*" Eugene says, "*I would not be able to volunteer my services to those in need*" without a free, open and neutral Internet.

Sean Siem a *user group organizer* depends *highly* on the Internet and primarily uses the Internet for "*application & business development.*" Sean says, "*I organize the Seattle Unity User Group, with over 2500 developers; AR/VR applications and games rely on an open, accessible internet to connect players to each other and make new, dynamic products available to the marketplace. Please do not allow telecom companies to ruin the internet.*"

Erik Froyd runs a *small business* and depends *highly* on the Internet. Erik primarily uses the Internet for "*company meetings, client meetings, sales meetings and presentations, research, data storage, accounting, time tracking, tax reporting, marketing.*" Erik thinks, "*Every critical business function relies on fast, reliable and affordable internet access.*" Erik says, "*All of our business operations rely on the internet. The company has 13 full-*



time employees, offices in two different states, and client accounts around the country. A significant change in accessibility and/or cost would be disruptive with the real potential of putting our company out of business."

Yes Segura runs a small business and depends highly on the Internet. Yes primarily uses the Internet for "business, social life, and family." Yes says a free, open and neutral Internet "allows me to make un-bias decisions."

Harte Daniels is a Project Management Office operations specialist and large, enterprise-wide technology systems implementer who depends highly on the Internet. Harte primarily uses the Internet for "research to determine the economic viability of executing projects and programs worth up to \$42 million dollars for my employers, contributing to my professional organizations, distance learning in technology, accessing disability services, communicating with my state's Vocational Rehabilitation caseworker, monetary transactions and record keeping, connecting under-served populations with services, and finding data sources for data modeling and visualizations". Harte says, "I use the Internet in performing my duties to my employers and community in supplying fair and unbiased information so they can make fruitful decisions for their health and business. I used a free and open Internet to swiftly design solutions saving the lives of 1,500 vulnerable survivors in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. As a disabled person I ask the Commissioners not to take my access to the world away from me."

Dorene Cornwell highlights the story of a refugee family depending on the Universal Service Fee program-Comcast Connect Home. She says, "The Family acquired a tablet and got signed up for Comcast Connect Home. This brought everyone access to email. The family quickly figured out how to find movies that feed their interests in the history and affairs of their home region. The other service the family needed: they needed to find an option so they, particularly the wife, can call relatives she misses very much in her homeland. This involved wading through lots of info sheets in tiny print in English, questions back and forth in the family's native language and in English with everyone helping look for the most affordable VOIP service that had service in the places they want to call.

This family vividly illustrates the value of the Connect Home program. Now the family is at a crossroads: they have good prospects for work and moving somewhat up on the economic ladder. They would like to move out of Seattle's overheated housing market, but they do not drive and find the logistics of travel to see other locations daunting. It is unclear how much shopping for housing they will be able to do over the internet without help. Another consideration absolutely will be moving to a place with internet resources at least as good as and hopefully better than what they have now to meet their specific needs.

In some cases, there are vigorous non-profits who can provide help in their customers' native languages. In this case for a combination of reasons that appears not to be an



option: the father is a community resource but, say, negotiating a contract to get paid for the language support for other customers is more than it is reasonable to expect him to do. This family's telecommunications needs are complicated enough with net neutrality; taking away the Universal Service Fee-supported programs such as Connect Home would make their situation even more complicated. If anything, the family's needs also illustrate the need for telecommunications companies to do a better job of designing, marketing, and delivering services to specific markets while also enhancing these communities connections to the wider society."

Karia Wong who works as a Family Service Coordinator at the Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC) says a neutral Internet is crucial for consumer protection and accessibility reasons. Karia says, *"For most non-English speaking Chinese immigrants in Seattle who are suffering from social and economic displacement due to language barriers and cultural shocks, similar to others in the mainstream society, Internet has become essential as utilities to them. In addition to connection with friends and relatives overseas; resources and information such as housing, employment, education, financial management that are crucial to the different aspects of their everyday life, they are starved for cultural relevant information on such as health and entertainment."*

Through Internet, Chinese immigrants are being able to stay in touch with their families and friends overseas, they are able to browse news and enjoy entertainment in their own language, they are able to maintain a connection with their home country while they are able to access to local news and information in US at the same time. Internet has become a breakthrough for their sense of social isolation and leads to positive impacts on their acculturation process and ultimately to their well-beings.

At CISC, because of language barrier, there were at least 200 clients came to seek assistance to resolve Internet-related consumer issues every year. Some of them might have come multiple times in order to fix their bills. Majority of them cannot read their bills nor would they understand any of the billing items or service contracts.

"My bill went up a lot this month. Can you help me to find out what's wrong?" This was the only reason they knew there might be something wrong and they needed help to contact their providers. Most of the consumer issues were caused by miscommunication with the providers, upselling or technical or human errors with at the provider's billing system.

For example, clients were told that the Internet only cost \$19.99/month when they signed up the service. They didn't know that in order for them to get that price for the Internet service, they had to sign up for phone and TV service at the same time. The Internet portion was only \$19.99, but with phone and service, the bill was almost \$80. It's not affordable for them.

In other case, there may be a computer error and the bill was generated without the promotional discount and clients didn't know what to do. There were times that service



interruption or the speed was not up to the standards stated at the service contract and they don't know how to get help.

Under the current regulations, where consumers are subject to protection of close regulatory oversight under Title II, non-English speaking immigrants are still suffering from all kind of consumer and service equity issues due to their incapability of self-advocacy.

With the proposed roll back of net neutrality and reclassification of the Internet service providers under Title I of the Telecommunication Act, the non-English speaking immigrants are become even more vulnerable because of their unique needs in accessing cultural relevant content, which is an addition to the English speaking population in the country. If they are not be able to pay for access to the entire internet free from blocking, throttling, or paid prioritization, their ability to access information needed for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services will be seriously jeopardized.”

The above stories indicate the moderate to high dependence of the citizens on the Internet. The stories are a testament to the importance of a neutral Internet to the Seattle community going forward. The CTAB in the light of these anecdotes, once again strongly urges the FCC to retain the Title II oversight and maintain classification of Internet broadband as a telecommunications service.