Dear FCC,

I am writing in support of subjecting ISPs to Title II utility-style regulations, or net neutrality. As a developer of widely-used weather software and an atmospheric scientist, I cannot stress enough that the proposal to repeal net neutrality rules could put American lives at risk by hurting their ability to get life-saving weather information in a timely manner. In addition, our ability to foster new knowledge and products that help save American lives from hazardous weather would be slowed by a repeal of the net neutrality rules. Neither result is acceptable in America.

Each year, Americans are exposed to a variety of weather hazards such as heatwaves, tornadoes, and winter storms. A significant number of Americans get their weather information from the Internet [1]. Our research shows that when under threat of severe weather, Americans compare and contrast weather information across several different sources. Fast access to this information is essential for them to make life-saving decisions. In some cases, Americans rely on social media to verify if a weather threat is near them. Should ISPs offer packages that include faster speeds to particular websites, some Americans may be unable to access life-saving information because they cannot afford it. If Americans cannot afford to pay for the faster speeds, they face an increased risk of death by weather. This scenario suggests that removing net neutrality will put the safety of Americans at risk. In particular, this decision will harm the poorer members of our society, as they are often more at risk to weather hazards (i.e. some live in trailer parks which are susceptible to tornadoes) and will struggle to maintain their Internet service should ISP prices rise.

In addition, such restrictions from ISPs will also slow our ability to generate more skillful forecasts and warnings for Americans. Any meteorologist will tell you how dependent they are upon the Internet to do their job properly, and any meteorologist will tell you how valuable the Internet has been to sharing their ideas. Compared to other countries, America is noticeably behind in computer-based, weather forecasting skill [2]. The skill of our weather models, which run on high-performance computers, are simply unable to regularly match those of our peers in other countries. Removing net neutrality would only serve to further harm our standing in the international community by restricting the communication between members in our field. For example, should ISPs offer specific packages for supporting different communication services (i.e., Facebook vs. Twitter vs. Google) in various parts of the U.S., communication across the Internet between scientists would no longer be seamless and would slow our ability to perform high quality research.

In summary, repealing net neutrality would expose Americans to an unnecessary risk by harming their access to life-saving weather information. Even further, repealing net neutrality would unnecessarily injure the infrastructure meteorologists currently rely upon to foster improvements to the weather forecasts and warnings used by millions of Americans each year.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter,

Greg Blumberg

[1] <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/weather-forecast-news-app-habits/>

[2] <http://mashable.com/2017/09/14/hurricane-irma-weather-forecast-models-gfs-vs-european/#XGBusACTNOqC>