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Comments on Proceeding Number 14-28 – Protecting and Promoting the Open Internet

I am a Comcast customer who, like many other consumers, pays quite a bit each month for high-speed Internet access. Comcast also charges extra for basically any related service they provide; for example, when the previous tenants of my residence discontinued their Comcast Internet service and I called the next day to transfer my service to said residence, I was forced to pay for a technician visit to "set up" the connection -- in spite of the fact that, obviously, all of the hardware was already set up properly. Furthermore, the price of my service has increased substantially in the past few years, without any corresponding speed or quality increases. Comcast, like other ISPs in markets without meaningful competition, has repeatedly shown that it has no qualms about taking advantage of its monopoly or near-monopoly status in most areas to charge exorbitant fees for Internet access and related services. Now they are using that status to force content providers (e.g., Netflix) to pay them to deliver content to customers like me, who are *already paying* to have said content delivered to them!

In competitive markets, ISPs use some of the money they receive from subscribers to consistently improve their infrastructure in line with increased network traffic, so that their customers continue to receive high-quality service. Due to a lack of either meaningful competition or robust regulation, Comcast has instead been able to bully content providers into paying for such upgrades. Comcast has no reason to care if service to its customers is degraded; said customers have no other ISP to switch to. Content providers, however, have a lot to lose if they can't effectively deliver their content to consumers.

Some content providers are doing well enough that they can afford to pay Comcast to make the kinds of network upgrades that they (Comcast) should already have been making on behalf of their paying customers. But many content providers, especially those just entering the market, will not be able to do this -- and they shouldn't have to. See again, consumers like me are already paying Comcast quite a bit to have high-quality content delivered to them.

In the absence of meaningful competition, robust regulation is essential to keep companies like Comcast, who naturally are interested in nothing but their own profit, from doing business in a way that holds back our country and its economy. The currently proposed regulations are nowhere near powerful enough to achieve this. Anything less than treating broadband Internet access as a utility -- as essential to public life in the 21st century as water is to our physical survival -- and ensuring full net neutrality (without "fast lanes" and "slow lanes") is not enough to stop companies like Comcast from keeping the U.S. in the digital Stone Age. A number of other countries, including Finland, Costa Rica, Estonia, and France, have declared broadband Internet access to be a basic human right; their leaders, unlike many decision-makers in the U.S., understand and acknowledge the importance of unrestricted Internet access to economic growth, education, innovation, and expression. Countries that allow corporations focused on short-term profits to overrule the common good, as the U.S. routinely does, will be left behind.