



Testimony of Craig Aaron in support of HB 957 and protecting Net Neutrality in Maryland

Before the Maryland House of Delegates
February 26, 2020

Chairman Davis and members of the Committee,

My name is Craig Aaron, and I'm the president and co-CEO of Free Press Action, a national, nonpartisan nonprofit organization devoted to issues at the intersection of media, technology and democracy.

Free Press Action takes no money from broadband providers, Internet platforms or media companies.

I'm here today on behalf of more than 1.4 million Free Press Action members nationwide, including more than 8,000 activists in the state of Maryland, to support strong Net Neutrality rules and the passage HB 957.

I am also here as a current resident of Montgomery County — and as a former longtime resident of Prince George's County — to urge you to protect the free and open Internet for all Marylanders.

More than 13,000 Marylanders filed comments on Net Neutrality with the Federal Communications Commission in 2017.

Unfortunately, the FCC has abdicated its responsibility to protect Internet users. That's why we need state leaders to step in to stop blocking, throttling and other forms of manipulation designed by powerful phone and cable companies.

Net Neutrality means no discrimination. It means internet service providers don't get to decide which websites and services you can use.

Net Neutrality is an economic issue for businesses large and small. It helps ensure a thriving marketplace online and encourages companies to compete and innovate without permission.

That's why nearly 200 Maryland-based businesses signed a letter opposing the repeal of Net Neutrality.

Some will claim that Net Neutrality harms investment. This is completely false.

The facts — based on independent analysis and the ISPs' own SEC filings — show that investment actually rose when Net Neutrality was in place and has declined since its repeal.

Net Neutrality is a consumer-protection issue. People need someone on their side when they are harmed by the whims of otherwise unaccountable broadband providers.

Net Neutrality is a free-speech issue. It means anyone can add their voice and, if they have something important or compelling to say, find a global audience.

Net Neutrality is an education issue that ensures Marylanders can go to school online, learning from Maryland's libraries and universities — as well as institutions around the world.

Net Neutrality is a racial-justice issue. It ensures that people of color can create their own content, organize in their communities and build their own businesses.

Net Neutrality is a popular and bipartisan issue. According to the University of Maryland, 86% of Americans oppose the Trump administration's repeal of net neutrality, including 82% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats.

For all these reasons — and in the hope that this assembly will protect Maryland families like mine and serve as an example for policymakers in other states and Washington, D.C. — I ask you to pass HB 957 to restore real Net Neutrality and join the fight for Internet freedom.

Thank you.

For more information, please contact:

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