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September 16, 2014

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
House Small Business Committee
1415 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nydia M. Velázquez
Ranking Member
House Small Business Committee
2302 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Velázquez:

On behalf of the more than one million members of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (NAR), I write in advance of your hearing entitled: "Is the FCC Responding to the Needs of Small Business and Rural America?" to express NAR's belief that open Internet rules are necessary to protect our members, who are primarily independent contractors and small businesses, as well as their clients.

As you know, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has recently proposed and has sought comment on new Open Internet rules that would permit Internet service providers to discriminate technically against and impose new tolls on American businesses that operate on the Internet. Permitting these actions would be disruptive to our members' businesses that have come to rely on an open Internet. Moreover, these actions would be especially harmful for small businesses and start-ups competing against larger companies that can afford such tolls. In order to continue the economic boom enabled by Internet innovation, NAR supports and has urged the FCC instead to adopt open Internet rules that will protect against blocking, discrimination, access charges, and paid prioritization.

The Internet has been a driving force for innovation for decades, and our members, their Customers, and local communities are benefiting from this innovation every day. The economic growth and job creation fueled by the open Internet is unprecedented in American economic history. This growth has been fostered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) under both Republican and Democrat administrations for over a decade.

Our members, who identify themselves as REALTORS®, represent a wide variety of real estate industry professionals. REALTORS® have been early adopters of technology, and are industry innovators who understand that consumers today are seeking real estate information and services that are fast, convenient and comprehensive. Increasingly, technology innovations are driving the delivery of real estate services and the future of REALTORS®' businesses.

Streaming video, Voice over Internet Protocol, and mobile applications are commonly used in our businesses today. In the future, new technologies, like virtual reality and telepresence among others, will be available that will no doubt require open internet access unencumbered by technical or financial discrimination.

NAR supports preserving an open Internet that in turn, promotes small business, job creation and personal liberty. We wish to see the FCC implement strong and enforceable rules of the road to protect the free and open Internet that includes no-blocking and non-discrimination. If left as proposed, the current FCC rule would harm Main Street businesses, such as REALTORS®, and their ability to be competitive in the high-speed, 21st century world.



The benefits of broadband Internet for innovation and economic development are unparalleled. But we'll lose those tremendous benefits if the Internet does not remain an open platform, where Americans can innovate without permission and with low barriers to launching small businesses and creating jobs. Given this reality, it is important that this Committee work with the FCC to enact and preserve open Internet policies that promote competition between Internet application and service providers. NAR is ready to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Steve Brown
2014 President, National Association of REALTORS®

cc: Members of the House Small Business Committee