



Legislation Text

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The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Informational Hearing - Impact of Net Neutrality Repeal on City Operations

For the purpose of calling on representatives from the Mayor's Office of Information Technology, the Department of Finance, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore City Public Schools, and the Municipal Telephone Exchange to appear before the City Council to discuss the potential impact of net neutrality repeal on their technology plans and the City's costs, as well as what steps can be taken to mitigate the risks posed by net neutrality repeal.

Recitals

Net neutrality, the principle that internet service providers (ISPs) should enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source, and without favoring or blocking particular products or websites, will officially cease being required by law on April 23, 2018. The current administration's rollback of Obama era protections for this bedrock internet principle is widely expected to have far-reaching consequences for internet development, innovation, and affordability going forward.

Without net neutrality requirements, ISPs, many of which enjoy effective monopolies in portions of the country, will be able to favor in-house content, require additional payments to access certain sites or types of services, or steer low-income and cost-conscious customers toward 'internet-lite' packages that offer access to only a limited number of sites favored by the ISP.

The relative lack of competition in the Baltimore ISP market could make us particularly vulnerable to abuses of providers' newfound power to charge consumers or content generators extra for the connectivity that they expect. In addition to the problems this could cause for all Baltimoreans, City government itself could be particularly challenged by departures from net neutrality principles.

The City needs to be aware of, and prepared for, the possibility that internet costs could rise, libraries and schools could be forced to choose between affordability and universal access for their patrons, services such as Voice over Internet Phones could become unstable or more expensive, and the City could be asked to pay ISPs to ensure that citizens can easily access municipal government websites. These concerns need to be considered and addressed as the City makes budgetary decisions and strategic plans about how to deploy technology.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council calls on representatives from the Mayor's Office of Information Technology, the Department of Finance, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore City Public Schools, and the Municipal Telephone Exchange to appear before it to discuss the potential impact of net neutrality repeal on their technology plans and the City's costs, as well as what steps can be taken to mitigate the risks posed by net neutrality repeal.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of Finance, the Comptroller, the Chief Information Officer, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, the Chief Executive Officer of Baltimore City Public Schools, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.