

Memorandum of SUPPORT

21st Century Internet Act

The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) supports the 21st Century Internet Act, H.R. 6393, introduced by U.S. Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO) and referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. The Act would permanently codify into law the principles of net neutrality, thereby ensuring that vital protections to all citizens' and schools' equal access to online information remain intact. Those principles state that Internet service providers (ISPs) shall not block, throttle, or engage in paid prioritization of lawful online content.

In New York State, access to the internet is not evenly distributed. There are 1.1 million people in the state with access to only one wired provider, leaving them no options to switch if they find that provider's offerings to be less than desirable or too costly. As representatives of New York's public school districts, this is greatly troubling.

Access to online educational resources helps school districts save money while exposing them to the most innovative and effective practices. Without protections from the Federal government, districts around the state will be vulnerable to the one or two ISPs that control the online content they can access. These ISPs can choose to charge educational companies providing online resources to schools significantly more to deliver content, and those companies could in turn pass those costs on to schools. For the many regions in our state with no ISP competition, we fear these providers will prioritize online companies who can afford to pay more. For schools unable to afford the higher fees passed to them by smaller educational technology companies, innovation will stall. As a result, certain schools will have far superior access to information than others and widen the achievement gap even further than it is now. That is unacceptable.

The government has a duty to protect students. The FCC voted to abandon current regulatory practices that ensure all people, students, and school districts have equal access to online content regardless of where they are living or learning. By passing this bill, the decision making authority would be removed from the FCC and placed in the control of Congress.

For these reasons, NYSSBA strongly supports the passage of the 21st Century Internet Act to uphold critical net neutrality protections.