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Lisa Drake, Director of Sustainability Innovation

April 30, 2018

Senator Jeanne Shaheen and Committee members
Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
Washington, DC 20510-6350

RE: Impact of Repeal of Net Neutrality Rules on Small Business in New Hampshire and rural communities

Dear Senator Shaheen:

On behalf of Londonderry-based Stonyfield Farm, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding our deep concern about the FCC's decision to roll back net neutrality rules. As a business with strong ties to the rural and agricultural business community, we would like to share our concerns about this decision.

We regularly witness how small rural businesses, including the farms and cooperatives that we source from, already struggle with limited access to broadband and limited options for internet service providers. The repeal of net neutrality would compound the challenges faced by these small businesses, adding cost and creating a competitive disadvantage to running a successful business in rural America. Uninhibited access to the internet is a fundamental necessity for operating a successful business in rural areas and this is only going to become more important in the future. In our work with farmers in the state and region, we see how these businesses are increasingly reliant on the internet for access to technical information and support, to market information and for communications with customers.

Under this change, internet providers would gain new powers to steer businesses and customers use and access to the internet. For example, Internet access providers could charge new fees for prioritized access. While large companies and farms might be able to afford a pay-to-play prioritized 'fast lane' to users, small and medium sized businesses might not and at the very least, put them at a distinct disadvantage with larger competitors. Without net neutrality, internet access providers could charge rural businesses new fees for access to websites and services. They could favor certain businesses by slowing down traffic or exempting traffic from data caps. Tiered service plans could throttle user access to a limited group of websites or block websites outright. It could also greatly limit or bias farmers' access to products, services, and information they need to run their business. These possible outcomes would create immense uncertainty for companies in every sector of the economy who rely on open, unencumbered connectivity as a key enabler for their business and productivity.



Ultimately, if the repeal of net neutrality is implemented, it will have a crippling effect on rural economies, further limiting investment in rural infrastructure and restricting access to the internet for rural businesses at a point in time where we need to expand and speed this access instead. We urge you to consider these impacts of the repeal of net neutrality rules and focus on advancing policies that foster fair competition.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this matter.

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