



May 22, 2018

Senator Ricardo Lara
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: **SB 822 (Wiener) – SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Lara:

California Labor supports SB 822 (Wiener), which will implement net neutrality in California and preserve its role in protecting basic workers' rights.

Net neutrality refers to the practice of ensuring that all internet traffic be treated equally. This means that the high profile and well-funded websites are treated no differently, with respect to access and speed of connection, as the most unknown and underfunded ones. Given the Internet's central role as a public sphere of discussion and information gathering, this neutrality must be preserved not just as a basic right, but also as a fundamental aspect of a well-functioning democracy.

On December 14, 2017, the FCC rescinded Obama-era regulations protecting net neutrality. The current FCC, led by anti-net neutrality activist Ajit Pai, repealed its own rules that had only been in place for two years, despite 22 million comments submitted – the vast majority of which were opposed to this change.

The effect of this could be disastrous; the possibilities for discrimination and oppression could be endless. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) could legally discriminate against workers organizing, for example, by simply cutting off access to pro-union websites, as happened in Canada when Telus did exactly that to an independent site expressing support for affected workers.

Or, short of completely cutting off access to pro-union websites, transmission speeds could be slowed as to achieve almost exactly the same outcome while still technically preserving "access". Employers—and those representing employers—involved in organizing disputes could also strike deals with ISPs that similarly or otherwise harm workers' rights to organize.

These risks exist right now, and our ability to learn of such abuses is limited, creating an urgent situation where major reform is needed immediately.

SB 822 (Wiener) will mitigate these concerns by implementing net neutrality in California. The bill will codify certain sections of the recently revoked federal rules shown to have worked well during their two years in existence, offering a known and well-researched solution to an unknown and potentially catastrophic problem.

We urge you to vote “YES” on SB 822 (Wiener) when it comes before you in the Senate Appropriations Committee on Friday, May 25, 2018.

Cc: Committee Members
Senator Scott Wiener

ms/tng39521/afl-cio
SM: OPEIU 29 AFL CIO