



**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COUNSEL
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA**

70 West Hedding Street
East Wing, 9th Floor
San José, California 95110-1770

**James R. Williams
COUNTY COUNSEL**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2020

Contact:

Erin Pelton, epelton@mercuryllc.com

Phone: 202-352-0442

**Statement from Santa Clara County Counsel James R. Williams on
Comments Filed Today with the FCC Regarding the Public Safety
Implications of the Net Neutrality Rollback**

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Santa Clara County Counsel James R. Williams released the following statement today regarding the County’s comments filed with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding the public safety implications of the Net Neutrality rollback. This step follows an October 2019 decision by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, which agreed with Santa Clara County that the FCC violated its core mandate by failing to consider harms to public safety and ordered the FCC to squarely address the public safety implications of the repeal:

“As we have said from the beginning, in repealing the Net Neutrality rules, the Trump administration violated the law when it failed to consider how the repeal threatens public safety. The spread of COVID-19 across the United States highlights in stark terms what we have known all along: that the FCC’s repeal of these rules threatens the safety of our residents and undermines our ability to provide emergency services and efficient crisis response. The repeal also dangerously permits internet service providers to prioritize profit over the kind of reliable and unfettered internet access necessary to coordinate our County’s emergency response. In light of the pandemic, we once again call upon the Trump Administration to reinstate Net Neutrality rules.”

“I would also note the absurdity of the FCC denying the County’s request for an extension to submit these comments in the midst of the pandemic response. The FCC’s assertion is that the issue has public safety implications that must be decided without further delay. The FCC lost on this issue precisely because it did not fully consider the repeal’s threats to public safety, and now it is attempting to cook the books by manipulating the timing of public comments in the middle of a pandemic that local public servants—our front-line defenders—are heroically battling. They cannot be diverted from their critical operations yet are essential to a full and accurate response to the FCC’s query.”

More information on the County’s efforts to advance net neutrality principles can be found at the County Counsel’s website at <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/cco/overview/Pages/Net-Neutrality.aspx>.

###

About the Santa Clara County Counsel's Office

The Office of the County Counsel serves as legal counsel to the County, its Board of Supervisors and elected officials, every County department and agency, and the County's boards and commissions. With a staff of over 200, the Office is also responsible for all civil litigation involving the County and its officers. Through its Social Justice and Impact Litigation Section, the Office litigates high-impact cases, drafts innovative local ordinances, and develops policies and programs to advance social and economic justice. The Section also defends the County in select cases with the potential to significantly affect the County's ability to provide critical safety net services to vulnerable residents. The Section is part of a growing movement to use the power and unique perspective of local government to better serve the community and to drive long-lasting change at the local, state, and national levels.

About the County of Santa Clara, California

The government of the County of Santa Clara serves a diverse, multi-cultural population of 1.9 million residents – more populous than 14 states. With a \$8.1 billion annual budget, dozens of departments and agencies, and over 20,000 employees, the County provides essential services to its residents, including public health protection, environmental stewardship, medical services through the County of Santa Clara Health System, child and adult protection services, homelessness prevention and solutions, roads, park services, libraries, emergency response to disasters, protection of minority communities and those under threat, access to a fair criminal justice system, and many others.