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Apple has broken its silence on net neutrality with a filing at the Federal Communications Commission, urging regulators to avoid repealing large swaths of the regulations that are aimed at constraining internet providers.

The filing calls for "retain[ing] strong, enforceable open internet protections" and argues that the FCC's current rules are effective at protecting consumers and online businesses. The agency is in the midst of a process to roll back the Obama-era rules, over complaints by broadband providers that the regulations are overly burdensome and keep them from upgrading America's high-speed internet networks.

Apple's stance on the issue dovetails with that of many tech companies who claim that, given the opportunity, internet providers could strangle new apps and websites by forcing them to pay fees or by prioritizing better, faster service for apps that the providers own or prefer. Internet providers have said that by exploring new business models, consumers could be better served - and carriers would find new ways of making money at a time when most Americans are already paying for internet service.

But the substance of Apple's submission is revealing in other ways, too. It highlights not just that the company is united with its Silicon Valley peers in principle, but it also shows where the company is headed with its business.

Apple has made no secret of its expansion into online services. Beginning with iCloud and more recently with its leap into health data, streaming music and video, and internet-connected personal assistants like Siri, Apple has demonstrated that it is increasingly reliant on its customers being able to access the Web in an unfettered manner.

Apple's growing stake in online services, then, puts it in much the same position as many other internet businesses who fear falling on the bad side of carriers such as AT&T, Comcast and Charter. Short of building its own broadband network across the United States, Apple has no choice but to hope that consumers will continue to be able to reach its digital products in a world where regulators have lifted restrictions on internet providers.

Apple didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. – *The Washington Post*