

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission**

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| <b>In the Matter of</b>                             | ) |                         |
| <b>Open Internet Remand</b>                         | ) | <b>GN Docket 14-28</b>  |
|   | ) |                         |
| <b>Framework for Broadband<br/>Internet Service</b> | ) |                         |
|   | ) | <b>GN Docket 10-127</b> |
|   | ) |                         |
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**Comments of Codecademy**

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Zach Sims  
CEO/Co-Founder  
CODECADEMY  
49 W 27th Street, 4th Floor  
New York City, NY 10001  
zach@codecademy.com

## **Executive Summary**

Codecademy educates millions of people, old and young, in computer programming through its free online courses and provides skills that lead to jobs. The company is committed to providing the best learning experience and has relied on an open Internet to do so. We are deeply concerned about the FCC's open Internet proposal because it would permit discrimination of applications and content subject to a vague "commercial reasonableness" standard. A two-tiered Internet that allows a priority fast lane would stifle competition, innovation, and the quality of online education. This result would harm our company, our millions of users, and the overall economy and its ability to compete globally. We urge the FCC to create clear rules, based on Title II of the Communications Act, that prohibit discrimination and paid prioritization on both fixed and mobile connections.

### **I. Codecademy Provides Free Programming Skills to Job Seekers and Others**

Codecademy is an education company that offers free online classes in computer programming. The company was founded in 2011 by two college students, Zach Sims and Ryan Bubinski. Since then, we have raised 12.5 million dollars in funding from investors. Our investors include Kleiner Perkins and Index Ventures, British mogul Richard Branson, Union Square Ventures, SV Angel, CrunchFund, Thrive Capital, Yuri Milner, O'Reilly AlphaTech Ventures, and others. Based in New York, we currently have twenty three employees. We plan to hire more people; we have ten positions posted on our website.

Codecademy helps to connect individuals with the practical skills needed to succeed in today's workplace. Codecademy's project-based training platform aims to help individuals gain coding skills in a hands-on way, with real projects, and constant feedback. We offer courses in six popular programming languages including HTML & CSS, JavaScript, jQuery, PHP, Python, and Ruby, through interactive games and lessons. Anyone with an internet connection can use

Codecademy's platform to learn to code and better his or her life. Currently, Codecademy has over 24 million users who have completed over 100 million exercises. These users include former New York City Mayor Bloomberg, who signed up for our "Code Year" challenge in 2012, as well as students, people who have been laid off from work or otherwise are getting into new careers, and anyone who wants to learn to code. We also partner with employers to help get their workers more code-literate.

Codecademy also introduces young students to coding. Our products are used in tens of thousands of after-school programs around the United States. We are proud to be a curriculum provider for the Hour of Code, a nationwide initiative by CSEdWeek and Code.org., whose goals are to introduce computer programming to 10 million K-12 students and to encourage them to learn programming. In addition to helping people learn how to code, Codecademy also helps people learn how to teach code. Built specifically for teachers, we offer lesson slides, quizzes and practice sets, as well as enabling teachers to craft their own materials and then share them with the rest of the learning community.

Last year, we launched our mobile app, "Hour of Code," to help people to learn how to code, conveniently, from anyplace and anytime. We built an entirely new Codecademy experience for mobile that includes the same things that make the browser-based version of Codecademy great: interactivity, "snack-sized" content, and fun lessons.

We have made tremendous progress in a short time, making programming skills and greater employability attainable for millions of people, and not only in the U.S. but globally. We teach coding in several languages including Spanish, French, and Portuguese. This May, we opened our first international office in London, from which we lead our partnership with educators and with hundreds of schools in the United Kingdom. We also will launch a program to bring Codecademy to schools in Estonia, which has already added coding education to its national curriculum. We are launching in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, which will use

Codecademy in many schools this year. We plan to continue to expand our impact on the world-wide community of aspiring programmers and creators.

Codecademy has put quality education within the reach of millions of individuals worldwide by offering free courses in coding. The ever-rising costs of higher education and heavy student loan debt has become a national problem. Codecademy is an innovative solution for schools and students to save money.

Our company also has an important impact on job creation. We're building the basic steps of competency to help people start their own companies, websites, apps, and products and get entry level jobs right now. The next big thing, or an innovative solution to a social problem, could be developed by someone who learned how to code using Codecademy.

But none of that may happen if the FCC adopts its fast-lanes proposal and abandons an open Internet.

## **II. We Could Have Never Founded this Company Under the Chairman's Proposal**

Our co-founders, Zach Sims and Ryan Bubinski, had the idea for Codecademy while they were students at Columbia University in New York. Bubinski was teaching people how to write code, and Sims was learning how to code. The two thought that there should be an online resource for learning specific programming languages and techniques. They built the product for Codecademy while at Y Combinator, the well-known start-up accelerator.

They could not have founded Codecademy if the Chairman's proposed rules were in effect three years ago. First, the Chairman's proposed rules would have made it hard, if not impossible, to get the funds necessary for getting Codecademy off the ground. Since Codecademy was founded by two college students, who did not have enough personal funds to finance such an ambitious project, our founders relied upon funds from outside investors. We developed our product only a few weeks before demonstrating it in front of potential investors at Y Combinator. We would not have been able to afford access fees or priority at that early stage

and could have turned off investors if the demo was slow, or video or other high-bandwidth content had trouble loading.

Even if our demo went smoothly, however, potential investors would have realized that our competitors would have a leg up on us, and they might have been deterred from investing in us. Our competitors include traditional providers of online education, who charge high tuition fees. That means they can, first, afford to pay for premium access. Investors might not have chosen to invest in Codecademy if they were faced with a stark choice: either invest more money and enable Codecademy to compete, or invest less and leave Codecademy at a permanent technical disadvantage. Our large competitors are in a better position to strike deals with ISPs—including, under the FCC's proposal, exclusive deals—to block upstart competitors like us. If our competitors did strike deals and our content loaded more slowly and less reliably than competitors, we would have been done for. Even the threat of such a deal, however, would have injected enough uncertainty to deter the investors we needed.

### **III. Our Concerns Are Real and the “Commercial Reasonableness” Standard Will Not Help Us At All**

A two-tiered Internet—where we have to either pay a fee to each cable and phone company to get the same treatment as our competitors—would change our business model, slow our growth and hiring, and affect our costs and fundraising. It would harm our millions of users learning to code for free on our website. Having the right to sue large broadband providers at the FCC under extremely vague standards provides us no comfort. These providers have billions and revenue and hundreds of lawyers. (Like most smaller companies, we have no in-house attorneys.) Under the FCC's rules, they can discriminate first and force us to sue them, while at a competitive disadvantage in at least part of the market. Plus, the FCC is the very agency aiming to authorize discrimination and fast-lanes. Plus, the commercial reasonableness standard requires us to hire a team of lawyers and expert witnesses we cannot afford merely to

get “reasonable” treatment and fees, when what the open Internet has traditionally guaranteed is neutral, equal treatment. Under the FCC’s proposed rules, we anticipate having to fight these battles at home as well as abroad, as foreign ISPs seek the same right to discriminate that the FCC Chairman is proposing to grant to American ISPs.

We need real net neutrality rules, not network discrimination rules supported by the ISPs who have lobbied for a decade for the right to discriminate and impose fees. We need an open Internet rule that prohibits blocking, discrimination, and access fees - on both fixed and mobile connections - which requires reclassification under Title II of the Communications Act. We urge the FCC to do the right thing for the millions of Americans learning how to code online, the businesses they work for or will work for, as well as the next generation of American entrepreneurs, employers, and employees.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Zach Sims

Zach Sims  
CEO and Co-Founder  
Codecademy