

June 14, 2021



The Honorable Scott Oelslager  
Representative, District 48  
Chair of the House Finance Committee  
77 South High Street, 13th Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: HB 110 Should Support Community Broadband Solutions, Which Are Critical to Connect All Ohio Residents

Dear Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, and Ranking Member Crawley,

Residents and businesses in every corner of Ohio need high-quality, reliable, and affordable Internet access. Next Century Cities is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) focused on supporting local officials and community leaders in their efforts to bring high-quality and affordable service within reach for every resident, including 11 of our member municipalities in Ohio. Statewide, local governments have established their own broadband solutions to fill critical service gaps and revitalize their community's economy.

Thousands of Ohio residents and businesses enjoy fast, reliable service through municipally owned and operated networks. For example, community-owned broadband providers in Fairlawn and Hudson were created to fill a bandwidth void, not served by local incumbent providers. These networks now offer transparent prices and have kept their businesses and residents connected to vital resources throughout the pandemic. Medina County operates an open-access network that promotes competition among providers, while the service that the City of Dublin provides to businesses is an essential tool for economic development.

Public providers offer services that invite business investment into their communities and improve their residents' quality of life. The Senate Amendments to House Bill 110 ("HB 110") would undermine those efforts.

Inhibiting current municipal providers from offering service would weaken consumer choice and reduce incentives for quality improvement. Limiting networks' ability to only support unserved areas will leave residents without high quality services needed for telework, distance learning, healthcare, and other indispensable services. Further, requiring that providers remain in their political subdivision will undermine collaborations between local governments, partnerships that frequently produce cost savings and expedite deployment timelines.

In effect, HB 110 could restrict communities' funding opportunities for network deployment. Instead of expanding broadband access in communities with the greatest need, the current proposal promises to hinder long-term broadband development plans, which often rely on a variety of funding sources. While federal



funding is available for communities to improve local infrastructure, such as high-speed broadband networks, HB 110 could also cut Ohio communities off from critical funding pools, sabotaging new and future opportunities to improve broadband infrastructure.

There are local and statewide benefits associated with Ohio communities being able to take full advantage of any and all resources aimed at improving digital infrastructure, but local governments need the authority to provide service wherever they build networks.

Rather than restricting the purposes for which communities can use their broadband infrastructure funds, legislative remedies should support a collaborative approach to expanding broadband access. That requires inviting local solutions that redefine connectivity for Ohioans who have persistently struggled to get online.

We look forward to partnering with you and Governor DeWine, working together to ensure that all Ohioans can get online.

Sincerely,

Next Century Cities

City of Canton

Patrick Barton, Director of Information Technology

City of Dublin

Dana McDaniel, City Manager

City of East Liverpool

Greg Bricker, Mayor

City of Fairlawn

Ernie Staten, Director of Public Service

City of Hudson

Jane Howington, City Manager

Jim Stifler, Chief Economic Officer

Paul Leedham, Chief Innovation Officer

City of Zanesville

Donald Mason, Mayor

Heartland-Council of Governments/North Central Ohio Computer Cooperative

Andy Melick, Executive Director

Miami Valley Educational Computer Association



Thor Sage, Executive Director

Northeast Ohio Network for Educational Technology  
Matthew Gdovin, Executive Director

Southwest Ohio Computer Association  
Donna Davis Norris, Executive Director

Timothy Barhorst, Network Engineer, Barhorst Consulting Group

Village of Granville  
Herb Koehler, Village Manager

CC: Representative Scott Wiggam  
Representative Haraz N. Ghanbari  
Representative Timothy E. Ginter  
Representative Thomas F. Patton  
Representative Janine R. Boyd  
Representative Stephanie D. Howse  
Representative Michael J. Skindell  
Representative Jeffrey A. Crossman  
Representative Adam C. Miller  
Representative Mary Lightbody  
Representative Beth Liston  
Representative Laura Lanese  
Representative Dontavius L. Jarrells  
Representative Jessica E. Miranda  
Representative Bill Seitz  
Representative Catherine D. Ingram  
Representative Emilia Strong Sykes  
Representative Bob Young  
Representative Bill Roemer  
Representative Andrea White  
Representative Rodney Creech  
Representative Lisa A. Sobekil  
Representative Derek Merrin  
Representative Reggie Stoltzfus  
Representative Jennifer Gross  
Representative Paul Zeltwanger  
Representative Joseph A. Miller III  
Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan  
Representative Daniel P. Troy  
Representative P. Scott Lipps  
Representative Michael J. O'Brien  
Representative Adam C. Bird  
Representative Marilyn S. John  
Representative Robert R. Cupp  
Representative Phillip M. Robinson, Jr.  
Representative Kent Smith  
Representative Terrence Upchurch  
Representative Juanita O. Brent  
Representative Bride Rose Sweeney  
Representative Monique Smith  
Representative Kristin Boggs  
Representative Richard D. Brown  
Representative David Leland  
Representative C. Allison Russo  
Representative Thomas E. Brinkman Jr.  
Representative Cindy Abrams  
Representative Brigid Kelly  
Representative Sedrick Denson  
Representative Tavia Galonski  
Representative Casey Weinstein  
Representative Willis E. Blackshear, Jr.  
Representative Tom Young  
Representative Paula Hicks-Hudson  
Representative Michael Sheehy  
Representative Thomas West  
Representative Sara P. Carruthers  
Representative Thomas Hall  
Representative Gayle Manning  
Representative Dick Stein  
Representative Al Cutrona  
Representative Jamie Callender  
Representative Mike Loychik  
Representative Jean Schmidt  
Representative Kris Jordan



Representative Rick Carfagna  
Representative Darrell Kick  
Representative Larry Householder  
Representative Bill Dean  
Representative Diane V. Grendell  
Representative Brian Stewart  
Representative Jena Powell  
Representative Craig S. Riedel  
Representative Susan Manchester  
Representative Tracy M. Richardson  
Representative Gary Click  
Representative Brian Baldrige  
Representative Mark Johnson  
Representative Jay Edwards  
Representative Ron Ferguson  
Representative Brett Hudson Hillyer

Representative Sharon A. Ray  
Representative Mark Fraizer  
Representative Brian E. Lampton  
Representative Gail K. Pavliga  
Representative Jeff LaRe  
Representative J. Kyle Koehler  
Representative James M. Hoops  
Representative Jon Cross  
Representative A. Nino Vitale  
Representative Riordan T. McClain  
Representative D. J. Swearingen  
Representative Shane Wilkin  
Representative Jason Stephens  
Representative Don Jones  
Representative Adam Holmes  
Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur

