

June 14, 2021



The Honorable Matt Dolan
Senator, District #24
Chair of the Senate Finance Committee
Statehouse, Senate Building
Columbus, OH 43215

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

Dear Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, and Ranking Member Sykes,

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 Amendments to House Bill 110 ("HB 110") passed by the Senate last week 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.

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

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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: Senator Rob McColley
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Senator George F. Lang
Senator Stephen A. Huffman
Senator Niraj Antani
Senator Steve Wilson
Senator Louis W. Blessing, III
Senator Cecil Thomas
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