



**HB 378 Ohio Broadband Grant Program (Smith, Cera)  
Proponent Testimony (written only)  
Ohio Municipal League & Ohio Township Association  
December 12, 2017**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Finance Committee, on behalf of our members, we would like to offer our support for House Bill 378, which would create the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program and appropriate \$50 million annually for that purpose, including up to \$5 million to eligible local governments, businesses, nonprofits and co-ops to bring broadband infrastructure to unserved areas of the state.

The use of internet entwines our daily lives in all areas - education, employment, development, and banking. The 28% of Ohio citizens without access to broadband are deprived of education and training opportunities, employment opportunities, and public safety and healthcare resources. As pointed out in sponsor testimony by Representatives Smith and Cera, there are still communities in Appalachia that have ZERO broadband service and counties in eastern Ohio that have only 40-60 percent connectivity to broadband. Areas without internet are economically underserved, both due to a lack of e-commerce opportunities and because the millennial workforce does not choose to live or work in communities without quality and reliable broadband access.

House Bill 378 would give both the private and the public sector the ability to bring broadband access to the 300,000 Ohioans currently without internet access. Local governments, in particular, understand the urgency of getting broadband to the unreached areas of their communities. The Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program would give municipalities and townships a financial tool to aid in securing broadband access for their residents.

We appreciate Reps. Smith and Cera's recognition of the need to bring broadband to the unserved areas of the state for creating a tool local government can use to overcome the existing cost barrier. As stated by the sponsors in testimony, ensuring high-speed broadband capability will help our entire state remain competitive nationally and continue to be a desirable place to live, work and visit.

The Ohio Municipal League and the Ohio Township Association strongly support HB 378 and respectfully request your favorable passage. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions about our position on this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Respectfully,

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Executive Director  
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