

Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

I appreciate you providing the opportunity to hear from those of us living and working in the communities that lack the infrastructure of high-speed broadband internet services. My name is Betty Young and I serve as the President of Hocking College in rural Southeastern Ohio serving Athens, Hocking and Perry Counties officially and unofficially the many rural citizens of the surrounding counties. I am testifying today in support of House Bill 378.

Hocking College serves 3,000 students in programs focused on natural resources, business and hospitality, public safety and health and workforce development in trades essential to our economy. Quality education and training, content and the delivery of that content, requires high-speed connectivity. Without high speed, internet services it is like stepping back in time.

My grandfather worked to bring electricity and telephone service to our rural home, my father organized to bring public water to our farm life. Without this infrastructure, it would be hard to imagine rural life today. We are at this same juncture in building infrastructure in rural Ohio for high-speed broadband internet service. WE must move the 1 in 12 Ohioans from technology isolation of dial-up or no access at all to high-speed connectivity needed to level the playing field educationally and economically.

For our students it means access to content for their classes. Hocking College lags in our ability to offer students highly interactive content because they simply cannot receive it in their communities. We have discontinued our very expensive cadaver lab replacing it with virtual labs that actually provide a more robust active learning experience as students peel back each layer of skin and tissue to reveal the functioning body in anatomy and physiology classes. We use simulation to teach new welding processes before a student engages on dangerous equipment better preparing them for success and improving their proficiency. These technologies run on high-speed connections. Unfortunately, some of our students and our faculty are still living in the dial-up age and this material will simply not run on their equipment.

Homework looks different today from homework of the past. Students today, with technology, complete interactive assignments before class and class time is engaging with that content, working in teams simulating the workplace, bringing the content to life. Gone are the lectures, the sage on the stage of the past. Students “homework” includes immediate feedback through the technology providing greater mastery of materials and ultimately better performance on workplace skills.

For our youth the very act of exploring careers and being inspired by the content available via high-speed connectivity is essential to develop their expectations and a vision for their future. The pathway to prosperity is paved with the experiences of engaging in a global world, not just knowing about it, but interacting with a global community, in a global economy. High-speed internet connectivity opens the world of the 21st century the same way telephone connections and interstate highways opened the world of education and commerce during the last century.

Hocking College is designing curriculum using free and open source materials to reduce the cost of test books and ultimately the total cost of education. We cannot deliver this content without the connectivity.

I have lived in the city where I took for granted high-speed connectivity and access everywhere. I also have lived where I used an outhouse and pumped my water with a hand pump. I know first-hand the difference between the have and have-nots; I see it in my students. Too much of rural Ohio lives in the shadows because we simply do not have the essentials for prosperity.

I am here to testify in favor of House Bill 378 to carry on the legacy of my family in bringing modern services to our rural communities. To assure our citizens, our youth have all they need to achieve academically and in their business ventures and continue living and developing our rural communities.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to testify today. I appreciate your consideration in supporting House Bill 378.