



Mid-Ohio Regional  
Planning Commission

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Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission  
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 378  
Ohio House Finance Committee  
December 12, 2017**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the benefits and importance of House Bill 378, which would help expand broadband service to unserved areas of the state through the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of more than 60 local governments and regional organizations in the 15-county Central Ohio region. As a metropolitan planning organization and regional planning commission, we support our diverse local communities across a broad range of issues to ensure they are vibrant, efficient, and have the needed infrastructure to provide important services and experience economic growth. Access to broadband is very important to this effort.

When looking at a map of unserved broadband locations in our region, it is no surprise that lack of access to broadband becomes more prevalent outside of Franklin County, in the rural areas and smaller communities of Central Ohio. While broadband offers a host of benefits for those with access, two in particular stand out for such areas. In the face of shrinking employment and disproportionate impacts of the opioid epidemic that many of Ohio's small and rural communities face, broadband service offers opportunities for new and expanded businesses along with more efficient delivery of emergency and medical services. The residents and businesses in these and similar locations across Ohio deserve the same access to innovations that broadband provides in better-served areas of the state. We support House Bill 378 because it seeks to ensure that no community is left behind by providing financial assistance for communities toward this end.

I would like to add that MORPC regularly convenes a group of public-sector information technology professionals to discuss matters relating to technology and facilitate best practices. This group seeks to coordinate technological infrastructure and communication among our members, and broadband expansion is one of its top priorities.

By giving communities the ability to apply for grant funding that builds out our broadband system, rural communities in Central Ohio and across the state have the opportunity to further promote a robust economy, attract jobs, and improve access to education and workforce training. House Bill 378 and other similar efforts will help to enhance the financial stability of our low- and moderate-income households.

We commend Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Cera for their thoughtful approach to this issue and look forward to the passage of the legislation.