



House Finance Committee

House Bill 378 – Proponent Testimony (written)

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Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of House Finance Committee:

My name is Jon Honeck. I am a Senior Policy Analyst with CCAO. I am writing to express CCAO's strong support for House Bill 378, which would appropriate \$50 million per year to create the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program. CCAO supports state programs that encourage greater internet and broadband accessibility statewide. Accessibility to high speed internet service is critical to ensure access to economic development opportunities for all Ohio residents and businesses. Areas of the state without access to broadband services will be at a competitive disadvantage in the 21st Century economy.

According to a 2017 Ohio State University study (*Connecting the Dots of Ohio's Broadband Policy*, OSU Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy), more than one million Ohioans do not have access to broadband services in their homes. This un-served population largely lives in rural regions of the state where it is too expensive for internet service providers to extend service. The state would receive significant economic benefits from broadband extension. The study calculated that the full extension of broadband would generate between \$1 billion and \$2 billion in economic benefits for consumers over the next 15 years. Other benefits, which were not calculated, included improving job search prospects for unemployed workers.

Strong state support is needed because most local governments will find it financially difficult to improve broadband access on their own. We commend the sponsors of House Bill 378 for their leadership, and urge the committee to favorably report this legislation.



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