

March 6th, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Smith

Chair, Ohio House Finance Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing you today in support of House Bill 378 to create the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program. The lack of access to high speed internet has been an ongoing issue in Harlan Township, Warren County Ohio.

The northern part of our township has limited access to high speed internet and most of the area has no high speed access at all.

Over the past ten years I have held meetings, phone conferences, and made hundreds of calls to contractors, groups for the expansion of broadband internet, and to the phone and internet providers that are responsible for coverage in our area of Warren County Ohio. Over these ten years there has been very little progress made as the providers continually state there is not enough return on their investment due to the rural area that we live in.

Access to broadband is no longer a luxury in our society. It is a necessary utility in our daily lives. High speed internet is a necessity for all Americans to fully participate in our economy.

It has been proven in multiple studies that broadband not only drives economic growth, but expands the online marketplace nationwide by creating jobs, business opportunities, and improving our quality of life.

Harlan Township residents are being negatively affected as a direct result of not having access to these benefits. Their lives are restricted and access to improving education and job opportunities is stifled! I continue to receive phone calls, text messages, and emails almost daily concerning this issue from frustrated residents. It is hard to compete in today's economy and improve in education, economy, health, opportunity, and overall quality of life without this valuable tool in our everyday activities.

The surrounding communities in our area will continue to excel and succeed, leaving our families and children further behind, while we are held hostage to limited and in some cases nonexistent, internet availability.

As a Harlan Township Trustee, this is not the future that I envision for our residents. Our residents deserve a fair playing field with other communities and when given the same opportunities, they will thrive and prosper.

I am asking for your consideration in assisting us in this matter with the implementation of HB 378. This bill is our best opportunity to bring broadband to Harlan Township as quickly as possible. Your consideration of moving this bill to passage is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Marcus W. Shelton

Harlan Township Trustee