



May 26, 2020

Ohio House Finance Committee

RE: Substitute House Bill 13 – Proponent Testimony

Co-chair Oelslager, Co-Chair Callender, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to write on behalf of Ohio REALTORS® in support of Substitute House Bill 13, a bill that would expand broadband access across Ohio. We thank Representatives Carfagna and O’Brien for sponsoring this important legislation and bringing attention to underserved communities that lack access to broadband.

Ohio REALTORS® represents 33,000 members who serve all communities – both large and small – across the Great State of Ohio. Many REALTORS® reside in areas of the state where accessing high speed internet to operate their small business is a non-issue, however far too many members live in areas that are underserved by broadband access. Unfortunately, this is the case for many people and businesses here Ohio.

Even before the COVID 19 pandemic we were aware of these inequities. However, in the midst of the pandemic that has forced tens of thousands of Ohioans to work remotely, the severity of the issue is heightened and the importance of filling those gaps has become even more critical. When required to operate remotely, businesses with better connectivity have a greater advantage than those without. At Ohio REALTORS® we desire success for all our members and their businesses.

Equally, we want consumers and property owners to have access to broadband as so many Ohioans do already. By expanding access to high speed internet across our state, the ability for real estate professionals to offer their clients the most current technological tools when purchasing either a residential or commercial property would greatly improve. Additionally, it goes without saying that a home that is “on the grid” is more desirable than a home that cannot get access to today’s technology, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed how we work.

Broadband expansion is a vitally important, shared benefit for all Ohioans. Expansion will improve our individual and collective connectivity and better position current and future Ohioans to meet the technological demands of tomorrow today. As such, while we strongly encourage you to pursue a path of ensuring affordable high-speed access, we are mindful that associated expenses

**Chris Reese, CRS**, President • **Scott R. Williams**, CEO



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need to be broadly shared among beneficiaries and not unfairly target home buyers or sellers in the form of conveyance fees or other added burdens to property owners.

We applaud the DeWine administration for the creation of an Ohio Broadband Strategy, the office of BroadbandOhio and the financial commitment it has made should this piece of legislation move forward.

Ohio REALTORS® is excited to see movement on this issue in Ohio, specifically through Sub. HB 13. At the federal level the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) has been advocating for broadband expansion since 2012. While we are still hopeful for a comprehensive strategy at the federal level, Ohio has an opportunity to act now.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this issue. We respectfully urge the committee's support of Substitute House Bill 13.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott R. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and a period at the end.

Scott R. Williams  
Chief Executive Office  
Ohio REALTORS®