



Written Testimony on House Bill 13
House Finance Committee
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Co-chair Oelslager, Co-Chair Callender, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee regarding the GCP's support for House Bill 13 (HB 13). Additionally, we appreciate the leadership of Representatives Carfagna and O'Brien to increase access to broadband internet.

With more than 12,000 members, the GCP is the largest metropolitan Chamber of Commerce in the state. We are focused on driving the economic vitality of our region by building a strong and thriving climate for the broad business community, including small businesses, middle-market companies, and larger corporations. Our work encompasses a commitment to grow and retain a 21st century workforce and engage the region's stakeholders to address systemic inequalities that hinder economic growth. Reliable, affordable access to broadband internet is a part of this important work and swift passage of HB 13 offers a step in the right direction.

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis has further exposed the digital divide throughout Ohio and Cleveland is no exception. According to census estimates and a Plain Dealer ranking of the least-connected cities in Ohio, ranked by percentage of households without internet access, almost 30 percent of homes in Cleveland have no internet.



In our 2019-2020 Public Policy Agenda, we call for investments in infrastructure that will support digital inclusion and technology-based economic development statewide, including broadband. HB 13– which allows broadband providers to apply for state grants for service provided to unserved and distressed areas–is a critical starting point to achieve this goal.

Beyond GCP's support for this legislation, we understand more must be done in the effort to advance digital inclusion. We stand ready to work with countless partners in our region and across the state, including JobsOhio, to help solve our state's digital challenges and prepare Ohioans for the future of work.

We are grateful for the Ohio House's focus on a broadband expansion strategy and believe that bills such as HB 13 are crucial. Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for HB 13 and we look forward to our continued work with you.