

**Testimony Before
The Ohio Senate
Finance Subcommittee on Workforce
May 19, 2015
Presented by Brian Dicken, Vice President, Public Affairs,
Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Brian Dicken, I am the Vice President of Public Affairs for the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce. I am here today to speak in support of the telecom regulatory reform provisions in House Bill 64. Thank you for allowing my brief statement.

Earlier this year, the Chamber offered its support for telecom modernization. We believe this issue is necessary for all Ohioans. As you have likely seen firsthand while working with constituents and businesses in your district, there is a technology transition underway regarding phone service in this country. Over the last few decades consumers and businesses have moved away from the old copper based phone network and transitioned to an enhanced wireline and wireless network which delivers services from an Internet Protocol (IP) connection.

The Chamber is committed to policies and strategies that encourage job creation and attract new business opportunities to Ohio; these telecom provisions help Ohio to do both. In fact, a 2013 study conducted by research firm Information Age Economics, projects that wireless infrastructure investment will create 1.2 million new jobs over the next five years and generate as much as \$1.2 trillion in economic growth.

Consumers want access to wireless phone and broadband technology, and the absence of broadband can make a community a less attractive location for new investment and development. High-speed connectivity improves many aspects of daily life. Businesses both large and small can utilize IP broadband to more efficiently manage inventory, take payments using smart devices and compete with companies across the world in the Internet marketplace. Residents see the benefits of connectivity in increased access to educational tools, enhanced public safety and the ability to stay in touch with family and friends, both locally and abroad. If we want to continue attracting new businesses and residents, and then retain them, Ohio must offer the communications technologies that people desire.

The Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce believes it is time for Ohio to take another step to prepare the regulatory environment for this IP transition in the telecommunications industry. We need to ensure our state will continue to see the necessity in investing in network infrastructure including wired and wireless technologies, directly leading to job creation and a more competitive telecom marketplace. These commitments will provide a new economic stimulus to both the urban and rural areas of the Toledo region and all of Ohio.