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Testimony -- The Ohio Senate Finance Subcommittee on Workforce

In Support of H. B. 64

May 19, 2015

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Good afternoon Chairman Beagle and the members of the Committee, my name is Gary Little and I am executive director of the Community Improvement Corporation of Tuscarawas County and the Tolloty Technology Incubator. I am here to voice support of the telecom language in House Bill 64.

The Tuscarawas Community Improvement Corporation or CIC has been in operation for 50 years and is composed of volunteer trustees who are a representation of business and professional leaders in the county along with mayors and county commissioners. The CIC advances, encourages and promotes the industrial, economic, commercial, and civic development of all Tuscarawas County.

I want to take a couple of minutes to share why I believe the telecom provisions in House Bill 64 will move Ohio forward.

As I work with the elected officials and businesses in Tuscarawas County I see how many residents and businesses have already made the transition from the old phone system to one that operates over internet protocol, or IP technology. Expanding access to broadband-based technologies delivers real benefits to communities by providing new choices in healthcare, business, education and economic development.

Let me talk about that last topic: economic development. The CIC and our members are working to attract and retain businesses large and small throughout the county. Local governments are constantly working with private industry to upgrade the broadband networks, both wired and wireless, which have become a main component of successful economic development efforts. Many of these local governments have already made this transition as well, which allows immediate communication and the sharing of data, video and other important information regarding economic development.

One of Tuscarawas County's largest industrial parks is located in Newcomerstown in southern Tuscarawas County where it is very rural. Today our primary method of communicating with site selection firms, corporation real estate offices, real estate professionals, and Ohio's economic development organizations is through internet and wireless connections. We now need to communicate directly from a development site, showing pictures and data, via smart phones and iPads.....not using a stationary telephone located somewhere with landline.....even DSL is inadequate.

Another area I want to touch on today is Public Safety. Today, communities and public safety officials choose IP broadband-based technologies, both wired and wireless, more than ever before. Wireless devices have emerged as one of the greatest public safety tools for both first responders and for those in need of assistance with more than 400,000 wireless E-911 calls made nationwide every day—that's nearly 278 wireless 911 calls made every minute. According to the FCC, nearly 70 percent of 911 calls are made from wireless phones and that percentage is expected to continue growing.

Whether it be public safety, economic development, government, business or consumers, high-speed broadband technology is changing the way we do things for the better. I believe the telecom language in House Bill 64 will benefit the residents and businesses in Tuscarawas County and elsewhere throughout the Buckeye State. Thank you for listening to my testimony.