

Testimony -- The Ohio Senate, Finance Subcommittee Workforce

In Support of H. B. 64

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Hello Chairman Bill Beagle, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee.

My name is Gretchen Finniff and I am the Development and Volunteer Director for Faces Without Places, a Cincinnati based not for profit. I am here today to voice my support for the telecom language in House Bill 64, the budget bill.

The mission of Faces Without Places is to empower lives by removing educational barriers and providing enrichment opportunities for children and youth experiencing homelessness. We provide educational and enrichment programming, school transportation and supplies, and other specialized services to thousands of children and youth. Believing education to be the key to breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty, our primary goal is to provide educational stability for the approximately 6,000 children experiencing homelessness each year in Greater Cincinnati. Although there are other social services that provide resources for families experiencing homelessness to obtain food, shelter, work, and childcare, we are the only local non-profit that focuses exclusively on the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness.

Now, I'd like to briefly tell you why I believe this proposed legislation will benefit Ohio. As an elected official I know you have seen first-hand how technology and the Internet has changed lives for all of us. The Internet is creating jobs, driving innovation, connecting us to

family and friends, providing news and information and driving advancements in areas such as healthcare, education manufacturing, small businesses and agriculture.

Internet Protocol, or IP based networks have changed how we all communicate. These networks are both wired and wireless and allow a variety of products and services like smartphones, tablets, video chat and others to connect for the benefit of consumers and businesses. This move from basic telephone service to advanced services has many benefits to my organization and the students we work with.

I want to share a few examples of how IP broadband technologies and services allow students to connect and learn beyond the walls of their classrooms and local libraries:

- First, wireless technologies and services empower students to take advantage of online educational opportunities, including college prep and other specialized classes. This complements our educational and enrichment programming and the work of our public schools.
- Second: Distance learning provides access to educational programs and resources that may not be available to students in urban and rural school districts with limited resources.
- And, third, communications technologies and services also benefit our students and their families who are going online for training to enhance their career opportunities and apply for jobs.

I believe the telecom language in House Bill 64 will benefit the youth that Faces Without Places works with on a daily basis. These provisions seek to encourage investment in broadband networks throughout Ohio. Thank you for listening to my testimony.