

June 4, 2018

Chairman Scott Oelslager
Ohio State Finance Committee
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Oelslager,

We are writing to you today in support of Senate Bill 225 to create the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program. This legislation would provide financial support to vital broadband investment and infrastructure expansion in the vast areas of Ohio that remain unserved, particularly the 32-county Appalachian region of Ohio.

Many other states have successfully enacted similar legislation to increase investment of this vital infrastructure. I am concerned that Ohio will continue to fall behind if such legislation is not adopted very soon.

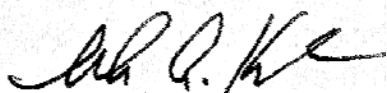
"Many other states have successfully enacted similar legislation to increase investment of this vital infrastructure. Having previously worked in North Carolina, I was shocked to see that the \$103 million allocated for rural broadband was significantly greater than what Ohio was budgeting, and coupled with the initiative to see all public schools linked to a robust fiber network, my fears are that the talent and education gap will only make Ohio less competitive moving forward.

The Southeastern Ohio Port Authority (SeOPA) is a statutory agent of Washington County created by the County Commissioners. Therefore, part of our mission is to "enhance and encourage the vitality and competitiveness of the Washington County business environment as well as to be a catalyst for job creation and investment by businesses, industries and entrepreneurs." In order to assist business and industry in our rural county, it is paramount to have broadband infrastructure for our existing businesses, schools, workforce and students to meet their everyday needs. The Port Authority will support any measures necessary to bring cost-effective, far-reaching broadband to our county.

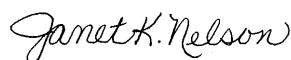
Broadband is no longer a luxury, rather a necessity for all of Ohio's citizens. Lack of access to this important infrastructure translates to lack of access to economic opportunities, educational advancement, informed healthcare, and business development.

We, at the Southeastern Ohio Port Authority, enthusiastically support the passage of SB225 so that all Ohio businesses and residents have the opportunity to thrive in today's digital landscape.

Sincerely,



Andy Kuhn
Executive Director



Janet K. Nelson
Executive Assistant