

To: Ohio House of Representatives, House Finance Committee
From: Bethany Dentler, Administrator, Medina County Port Authority
Re: Testimony Regarding HB 13
Date: May 27, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding House Bill 13. I am representing the interests of Medina County, Ohio, in two capacities today: as the Executive Director of the Medina County Economic Development Corporation, which serves as the Administrator of the Medina County Port Authority. In both of these roles, I have been involved with the construction and expansion of a publicly-owned fiber network since 2008, when the Medina County Port Authority selected a non-profit partner to construct a 150-mile network which now serves hundreds of commercial, industrial, and government customers.

The primary reason that the Port Authority decided to build as an open-access fiber network was because the lack of competition among private-sector broadband providers had led our community to suffer from high prices as well as lack of availability. Because of the decade-long efforts of the Fiber Network's CEO, David Corrado, we now have 13 private-sector carriers who are serving both private and public sector customers. We have also seen telecommunication prices charged by the private sector drop considerably, thanks to these competitive solutions which only come about because of the existence of a government-owned network.

We are now working to bring a residential broadband solution to our community to provide a competitive alternative to the telecommunications needs of our residents, but we are greatly concerned with HB13's provisions that would exempt government entities from submitting proposals. The definitions included in the current draft of this bill indicate that a "broadband provider' does not include a governmental or quasi-governmental entity.' (See lines 36-37 on page two of HB13 As Introduced.) If the bill is approved with this language, it severely restricts our ability to extend broadband to customers who would benefit from lower prices and consumer choices. We know first-hand that having a government entity involved in the

telecommunications industry helps to keep them honest and ensures that they are offering the most competitive prices available.

Now more than ever, we know that strong and reliable broadband is critical. During the COVID-19 crisis, we have seen a great need for fiber broadband in our residential community by parents working remotely or accessing telemedicine while sharing limited broadband access with their children engaged on online learning. We would encourage you to increase the minimum internet access speeds from their current requirements. As someone who has internet speeds of 100 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per second upload, I can testify that this is not nearly enough capacity to allow for multiple teleconferences in one household.

Yet, the current version of the bill only requires a minimum of one quarter of this capacity. This minimum requirement needs to be upgraded so that we can maintain our state's competitiveness. In a time when Ohio has a chance to greatly enhance the quality of life and skills of its existing residential population, and compete effectively for new residential growth by attracting those people who are seeking a new home where they can find great work in an affordable, spacious environment, we must show that we can provide a world-class telecommunications infrastructure.

On behalf of the board of the Medina County Port Authority, I respectfully request that the definition of "broadband provider" be revised to allow the inclusion of a governmental or quasi-governmental entity in the proposal submission process. We also request consideration of increasing the minimum internet access speeds to a point that would provide equitable access to the many Ohio residential communities that have lacked decent internet access for far too long.

We commend the efforts of this bill, but we believe that it can meet its goals much more effectively with these changes. Thank you for your time today.