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Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Substitute House Bill 13 – Proponent Written Testimony

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Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony in support of Substitute House Bill 13.

CCAO has long supported efforts to expand broadband access. The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened the need for reliable and affordable high-speed internet. The pandemic has forced millions of Ohioans to rely on broadband connectivity for access to education, commerce, telehealth, social connectedness and countless other functions. Unfortunately, lack of access to broadband has left over 300,000 Ohio households excluded from these arenas.

Substitute House Bill 13 establishes a competitive residential broadband expansion grant program that will make an impactful difference for Ohioans currently lacking broadband access. The \$20 million appropriation is a significant investment that will help make expansion projects economically feasible. The bill also establishes a process by which boards of county commissioners may request the Ohio Department of Commerce to solicit applications from broadband providers for program grants for eligible projects in municipal corporations and townships of a county. Local governments also may permissively invest in expansion projects to encourage local buy-in and help turn proposed expansions into reality.

CCAO thanks Reps. Carfagna and O'Brien for their efforts to address Ohio's broadband challenges. Expanding broadband access to all Ohioans will not happen overnight, but through efforts like House Bill 13, a meaningful difference can be made that will positively impact Ohioans. We urge the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee to favorably report Sub. House Bill 13 to the full Senate for a vote.

Thank you for your time and consideration of CCAO's testimony. Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact CCAO.



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