



Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee  
Substitute House Bill 13  
Proponent Written Testimony  
November 17, 2020

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.

My name is Jay Smith and I am the Director of Government and Legal Services for the Ohio Library Council (OLC). OLC is the statewide organization representing Ohio's 251 public library systems (rural, urban, and suburban) and the 8.4 million library cardholders they serve.

In our HB 13 proponent testimony from June 2019, we noted the importance of access to the internet in today's society and its essential function as a basic utility. That became even more evident and profound with the onset of the pandemic. When Ohio's public libraries temporarily closed their buildings earlier this year to help stop the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), library staff quickly came up with ways to continue to serve their communities. Ohio's libraries rapidly adapted their services by launching virtual programs, expanding digital collections, and keeping Ohioans connected with internet access.

Most libraries over the last several months expanded online services like e-books and streaming media, added new virtual programming, and made enhancements to keep their Wi-Fi on. Like many libraries, the Bossard Memorial Public Library (Gallia County) extended its Wi-Fi capabilities so that people can access the library's internet from the parking lot. The library also loaned all its mobile Wi-Fi hotspots, giving some to students who are taking online classes. The Elyria Public Library loaned iPads to their local nursing home so residents could continue to read online and stay connected with their families.

In previous testimony we had cited the fact that many libraries leave their Wi-Fi signals on at night. A library in southeast Ohio had reported that 50% of their Wi-Fi usage takes place after the library's normal business hours. Access to the internet in turn supports distance learning, unemployment assistance and other resources for impacted workers and businesses.

Sub. HB 13 includes numerous improvements to the as introduced version of the bill including a substantial investment of \$20 million dollars to help expand access to residential broadband.

We would again like to thank Rep. Carfagna and Rep. O'Brien for introducing this legislation and reinforce our strong support for its passage. If you have any questions about our support for Sub. HB 13, please feel free to contact OLC.

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