

**Minorities Together  
Movement**

Shaker Heights, Ohio  
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# December 1st, 2020

## Sub. H. B. No. 13 Opponent Hearing

Members of the Energy and Public Utilities  
Committee,

I'd like to thank Senator Sandra Williams and the rest of the Senate of the great State of Ohio for letting me testify against Ohio's House Bill 13.

I'd like to start by talking about the years between 1934 and 1968. I'd like to talk about redlining. The discriminatory practice of fencing off areas where banks would avoid investments based on community demographics, solely affecting minority communities by denying them aid from federal government agencies, local governments as well as the private sector.

American scholar, George Lipsitz citing that "98

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percent of the loans approved by the federal government between 1934 and 1968 went to white applicants.” Redlining deeply affected people of color. Redlining gave them very different opportunities than white people and ultimately put them at a huge disadvantage. Redlining still affects black and brown neighborhoods.

Now a new form of redlining has arisen with the digital divide. The 44th President of the free world said, “the internet is not a luxury it is a necessity”. In 2015, a study by the United States Census Bureau showed that thirty-six percent of African-American homes and thirty percent of Hispanic homes did not have a computer or a broadband subscription and in East Cleveland and Central Cleveland they have a 57% Internet deficit, as cited on the EYEJ digital access map. This means they virtually have no access to job applications, college applications, zoom calls, online health care, etc. The same thing goes for our youth. In a letter to their Democratic

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counterparts, Republicans on the House Energy & Commerce Committee wrote "Children need broadband to be able to do their schoolwork from home." According to a survey of parents conducted by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, 40 percent of families don't have internet access at home. This denies kids access to their now online classes and in the future will stop them from doing homework, so from the very start kids are already given a disadvantage.

House Bill 13 will give grants to big companies to build networks in areas that have none. In Cleveland, these companies were given the same opportunity and specifically skipped over "Glenville, Hough, Fairfax, South Collinwood, and Clark-Fulton" all neighborhoods with an 81% black and Latino population or higher. The grants the State will allot to each company do not require them to eliminate the divide in the cities and neighborhoods where the digital divide already exists. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance

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ranked Cleveland as the worst connected large city in 2019. This is solely the fault of the big companies, such as Spectrum and AT&T, that we are now being asked to trust in House Bill 13. We can not trust them to provide equitable networks to our rural areas and we must hold them accountable for the digital divide they have already caused.

Once again we are leaving behind the black and brown residents of Ohio and of our nation. If we do not bridge this digital divide and ensure that every child and adult has equal access to all the resources of the internet than we as a state and as a nation can not say that all men and women are created equal and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.

I urge the great senators of this great State to vote against House Bill 13.

You would not let water companies skip some areas of our state, you would not let electric utilities skip some areas of our state, and you

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should not let internet companies skip some areas of our state. I believe it is time to fight for digital access for all individuals. To fight for equal opportunity, to fight against systemic oppression, and to fight for equity as a whole, and I could not name a better place than Ohio to start.

Sincerely,

Ethan Khorana

Minorities Together Movement Leader