



**Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee
Interested Party Testimony, Senate Bill 8 (McColley)
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February 9, 2021**

Chair Peterson, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share Interested Party Testimony regarding Senate Bill 8.

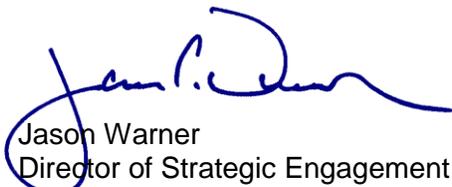
Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC) is a statewide non-profit organization that champions revitalization and sustainable growth in Ohio's cities and metros. GOPC is highly respected for its data-driven, nonpartisan policy analysis, research expertise, and policy development, and regularly provides expert analyses to public, private and nonprofit leaders at the local, state and national level. Our mission is to improve the communities of Ohio through smart growth strategies and research for a revitalized Ohio.

Through our work with communities across Ohio, both urban and rural, the one issue that we hear consistently is that there is a pressing need is access to affordable, quality high-speed broadband internet access. Whether it is rural communities in Appalachia or urban neighborhoods in Ohio's largest cities, the lack of access to broadband internet impairs the ability of millions of Ohioans to access work, education, commerce and even telehealth services.

Senate Bill 8 establishes a broadband expansion grant program within the Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA). Within ODSA, the bill would establish the Broadband Expansion Program Authority to reward \$20 million in grants to eligible projects to fund the expansion of broadband access, requiring that the project include the construction of last mile broadband infrastructure.

Senate Bill 8 represents an important first-step forward to helping ensure more Ohioans are able to access broadband internet. We hope more investments follow.

Thank you for your consideration of our thoughts on Senate Bill 8.



Jason Warner
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Greater Ohio Policy Center