



February 8, 2021

Ohio Senate
1 Capital Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee:

On behalf of the College Board, a mission-driven, non-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity, **I'm writing to express support for S.B. 8, which establishes the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program under the Development Services Agency (DSA) and will finance broadband expansion in communities across the state.** Providing access to reliable internet and devices allows students to keep up with their coursework and ensure learning continues during these uncertain times.

According to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) latest [report](#) on broadband deployment and access, more than 20 million Americans lack access to a broadband connection. In Ohio, 621,000 people do not have access to a broadband internet connection. **As schools continue with remote /hybrid learning, unequal access to broadband and devices is exposing a digital divide in the state, particularly for low-income populations, racial/ethnic minorities, and rural students.**

This spring, the College Board moved the 2020 Advanced Placement Exams online—after 91% of the students we surveyed told us they wanted the chance to finish what they started and take the test. We wanted to keep AP students on track at a time when it was unclear if students would be in or out of the classroom and provide them an opportunity to earn college credit. However, we knew access to stable and reliable internet and devices would be a challenge. We committed to an all-out effort to get students the support they needed, even if that meant hand-delivering laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots. We partnered with nonprofits already in this arena, school districts, and companies eager to pitch in. Four thousand students received a Chromebook delivered to their door thanks to a gift from Amazon. Another 1,000 received T-Mobile hotspots and data plans thanks to the Walton Family Foundation. We found another 4,500 devices to loan out through the end of June.

These efforts made a huge difference for the students we reached, but they are a small piece of a nationwide scramble. As educators across the country prepare for a fall semester sure to include a lot more online learning, we need dependable infrastructure for distance and blended learning.

Given College Board's commitment to limit learning losses and ensure continuity of education for all students, we are excited about the possibilities of the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Securing last mile infrastructure for Ohio's most vulnerable students will help ensure all of Ohio's students make progress in their K-12 education and are prepared for college and career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Walker", written over a light blue rectangular background.

Greg Walker
Vice President, Midwestern Regional Office
College Board

