



**Broadband Access Ohio**  
**Michelle Crandall, Chairman and Megan O’Callaghan, 1st Vice Chairman**  
**House Bill 96 | May 07, 2025**

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony today on House Bill 96, the state operating budget. We are Michelle Crandall and Megan O’Callaghan, serving as the Chairman and 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman of Broadband Access Ohio—the leading organization supporting high-speed, high-quality internet access. Our members represent public entities and public-private partnerships across the state that are committed to investing in high-speed internet access. Broadband Access Ohio members include municipalities, townships, associations, educational institutions and other public entities who understand the importance of a connected Ohio for all.

Our diverse membership includes municipalities, townships, associations, educational institutions, and other public-sector stakeholders who recognize that a connected Ohio is a competitive Ohio. We are grateful for the continued leadership of Governor DeWine and the Ohio House in supporting the development and expansion of broadband infrastructure. As the Senate deliberates the budget, we urge you to continue this collaborative effort to ensure that every Ohioan has access to reliable, affordable internet.

However, we would like to raise a concern with a provision that was added during House deliberations—specifically, the language that appears to exempt broadband providers from local and state right-of-way regulations and associated fees. We respectfully ask the Senate to remove this provision.

**Remove Broadband Internet Access Service Provision**

The provision related to broadband internet access service appears to exempt broadband providers from local and state right-of-way access regulation and fees. The ability for local governments to regulate the use of public rights-of-way through permits and fees is critical. Local management ensures public safety, protects infrastructure, ensures orderly development, and enables coordination among multiple users of these shared public spaces. Cities are responsible for managing streets, sidewalks, and utilities that serve as critical public assets and must balance access for utilities, telecommunications providers, and construction projects with the needs of residents, pedestrians, and local businesses. Permit systems are not barriers—they are mechanisms that ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency. They allow cities to minimize disruptions, recover the costs of inspections and oversight, and safeguard the long-term value of public assets. Without this authority, municipalities could be left with limited tools to manage competing interests in increasingly complex urban environments.

Additionally, Broadband Access Ohio members have demonstrated that local control has facilitated partnerships that improve connectivity and reduce costs for residents and businesses

alike. The current language’s ambiguity—especially the use of the word “entry”—could lead to legal and operational confusion, undermining years of thoughtful broadband policy development and could impair local government’s use and management of public rights-of-way.

On behalf of Broadband Access Ohio and our members statewide, we thank you for your time and consideration. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that Ohio’s broadband future is inclusive, sustainable, and locally empowered.