**Testimony Before**

**The Ohio Senate**

**Finance Committee**

**In Support of House Bill 64**

**June 11, 2015**

**Presented by Michael Hartley, Vice President, Government Relations, The Columbus Chamber of Commerce**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am Michael Hartley, Vice President, Government Relations at the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. In my role, I also represent the interests of Columbus 2020 and the Columbus Partnership. I am here today to speak in support of the telecom regulatory reform provisions in House Bill 64.

Earlier this year the Columbus Chamber of Commerce co-signed a letter of support on the concept of telecom modernization, which has been included in the budget bill before you today. The other organizations that signed that letter include: The Ohio Chamber of Commerce, NFIB Ohio, The Columbus Partnership and the Greater Cleveland Partnership. I have attached that letter to my testimony, but I want to take a couple of quick moments to speak about our support of this important issue.

The telecom provisions in HB 64 are essential for all Ohioans. As you all know and undoubtedly have seen first hand while working with constituents and businesses in your district there is a technology transition underway regarding phone service in this country. Over the last few decades most consumers and businesses have rapidly abandoned the old copper based phone network and transitioned to an improved wireline and wireless network which delivers services from an Internet Protocol (IP) connection.

Having access to the latest communications technologies allows Ohioans to take full advantage of economic benefits that have not been previously available. In fact, a 2013 study conducted by research firm Information Age Economics projects that wireless infrastructure investment will generate as much as $1.2 trillion in economic growth while creating 1.2 million new jobs over the next five years. Consumers want access to wireless phone and broadband technology, and the absence of broadband can make a community a less attractive location for new investment and development. For this reason, it is vital that Ohio provide a regulatory climate that attracts telecom infrastructure investment.

High-speed connectivity improves many aspects daily life, and can be crucial in attracting new businesses and residents. Businesses large and small can utilize IP broadband to manage inventory, take payments using smart devices and compete with companies across the world in the Internet marketplace. Residents see the benefits of connectivity in increased access to educational tools, enhanced public safety and the ability to stay in touch with family and friends, whether they are down the street or on the other side of the world. If we want to continue bringing in new businesses and residents, Ohio must offer the communications technologies that people crave.

The Columbus Chamber of Commerce believes it is time for Ohio to take another step to condition the regulatory environment for this IP transition in the telecommunications industry. We need to ensure our state will continue to see further network infrastructure investments in both wired and wireless technologies, which lead to job creation and an even more competitive telecom marketplace which will benefit businesses and consumers. These investments will benefit businesses large and small, and provide a new economic stimulus to both the urban and rural areas of the Buckeye State.

Thank you for allowing me to provide this brief testimony to you today.