



November 28, 2017

**MEMBERS OF HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**BRAD COLE, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH**

**WRITTEN PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HB 281**

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Good morning, Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Minority Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Brad Cole and I am Managing Director of Research for CCAO.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony on HB 281 which would establish the Residential Broadband Expansion Program to provide matching grants to local communities for last mile broadband expansion.

Representative Carfagna noted in his testimony that upwards of one million Ohioans lack broadband access due to where they reside. CCAO shares Representative Carfagna's concern that too many Ohioans fail to realize the benefits of connectivity due to limitations on the extent of broadband infrastructure. To that end CCAO has addressed this issue in its legislative platform which reads in pertinent part as follows:

“Access to broadband is critical for the development of technology, enhancement of educational opportunities, delivery of healthcare and growth of commerce. Yet only 71 percent of Ohioans have access to broadband service in their homes. Ohio needs to aggressively promote access, adoption and use of broadband throughout Ohio. The General Assembly must be committed to examining the barriers that limit access to broadband and promoting sound policies that encourage access to broadband in order to stay competitive in the national economy.”

HB 281 establishes a state and local partnership where townships and municipalities could sponsor individual projects to provide broadband service to specific eligible areas of homes. On an entirely permissive basis the bill envisions communities sponsoring a share of the last mile infrastructure costs with equal support from the county. Provided the sponsoring community and county are willing to provide two thirds of the project cost, the local governments would submit an agreement and application to the Development Service Agency which would be required to fund the remainder of project costs subject to the limit of appropriated state funds.



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CCAO thanks Representative Carfagna for his sponsorship of HB 281 and for attending a meeting at CCAO where this legislation was discussed. CCAO also thanks the committee for its consideration of our supportive testimony on HB 281.