



**House Bill 2 Proponent Testimony
House Finance Committee
February 8 , 2021
Stephanie Keinath, Vice President
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce**

Good morning, Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer and Ranking Member Crawley and members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Stephanie Keinath and I'm the Vice President of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2 today. We were supportive of this bill when it was introduced in the last General Assembly as H.B. 13 and we are supportive of the work that Representative Carfagna has done to bring this version of the legislation to you today. It represents countless hours of work and input from many different constituencies and we believe it will make a real difference in the lives of Ohioans.

As the leading voice of business in the Dayton region, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce represents over 2200 members across nine counties in southwest Ohio. For our members, and the business community as a whole, broadband access is a critical workforce issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all of us to re-examine how, and where, we work. For many businesses, this has meant expanding virtual meeting capabilities, shifting to remote or at-home work, and enhancing customer communication tools. The common thread these shifts is the critical need for broadband access.

House Bill 2 is one important component of the State of Ohio's broadband strategy. We applaud the work of Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted to prioritize digital infrastructure and broadband connectivity as central to our state's economic development. What was urgent pre-Covid, has now become acute, as businesses rely on broadband to connect their workforce and conduct their daily operations in ways we couldn't even envision ten months ago.

By establishing the state's first residential broadband expansion program, House Bill 2 will help Ohio's employers to connect and retain their workforce during these changing times. In particular, House Bill 2 will impact some of the rural areas of our state that have lacked access to adequate infrastructure. This grant program will make it easier to reach across long distances, connect isolated locations and keep Ohio competitive with other states when it comes to attracting and retaining new talent and business opportunities.

In the digital age, access to efficient, affordable and high quality internet service is absolutely critical. We urge you to pass House Bill 2 without delay and we look forward to working with you to ensure digital equity for all Ohioans. Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with you today.