

**Senate Bill 8 Written Proponent Testimony
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, February 2, 2021**

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 8.

The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber represents nearly 4,000 businesses across Southwest Ohio, Southeast Indiana, and Northern Kentucky. Our work includes a commitment to grow and retain a 21st century workforce and address systemic inequalities that hinder economic growth. Reliable, affordable access to broadband internet is a part of this important work and passage of Senate Bill 8 offers a step in the right direction.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for reliable broadband connectivity to ensure that Ohioans can access options for education and work. Additionally, this pandemic has brought to light the stark inequities in access to the means of remote learning and remote work. In 2020, the internet is as important and as essential to our lives as electricity and water were just decades ago.

Senate Bill 8 is a critical step in the right direction to ensure all Ohioans are able to participate in the world and economy of 2021 and beyond. Numerous companies with deep ties to Cincinnati have expressed strong interest in participating in broadband expansion. This legislation provides the necessary funding to close the gap and ensure Ohioans have access to strong, reliable internet connections. It is also important to note that, while the emphasis for broadband expansion has largely focused on rural areas with difficult-to-reach populations, there are also significant broadband gaps in Ohio's urban centers as well. These are more likely concentrated in low-income areas that only exacerbate already present economic inequalities. Expanding broadband in a place like Cincinnati will make our community more equitable and attractive to residents and newcomers alike.

We are grateful to the bill's sponsor, Senator McColley, and the dedicated leadership in the General Assembly who have made this legislation a priority. We urge passage of this bill.

Please reach out to me at 513.579.3120 or keagan@cincinnatiachamber.com if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued commitment to the success of our region.

Sincerely,



Katie Eagan
Vice President, Government Affairs