



THE CHAMBER

Of Greater Springfield

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 8
Presented by Horton H. Hobbs IV, Vice President of Economic Development
The Chamber of Greater Springfield
Ohio Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee
February 2, 2021

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Ohio Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 8, which creates Ohio's first residential broadband expansion program to serve unserved or underserved residential areas of Ohio.

At the Springfield Chamber, we advance important economic and workforce development opportunities, to promote ideas that will make our region more progressive, and to help our members grow by connecting them with each other and the broader community. Fast and reliable broadband infrastructure is critical for businesses and families to connect with one another and grow the economy. However, parts of the Greater Springfield and Clark County region lack the needed infrastructure to meet demands.

We are proud to support SB 8, which addresses access challenges head-on by creating a competitive, taxpayer-friendly grant program and eliminating regulatory barriers, which will help broadband providers construct the expensive and high-risk last-mile infrastructure needed to get broadband to Ohioans who live and work in unserved areas of our state.

SB 8 enhances Ohio's economic competitiveness as many other states in the U.S. have programs that supports the private sector building into unserved areas. Businesses and talent recognize the importance of broadband and will locate in areas that are focused on increasing access.

Broadband connectivity to unserved households is a matter that should be addressed by true public/private partnerships and rewards cooperation across the layers of government. By pooling resources and having all parties place some "skin in the game," the existing financial barriers become far less intimidating.

Thank you for the opportunity to support SB 8 and we appreciate your consideration of this important legislation.