



February 8, 2021

The Ohio Senate  
Ohio Statehouse  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Members of the Ohio Senate:

As pastors and ministry leaders in our great state of Ohio, we have seen the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the multifaceted toll it has taken on our families and communities. We believe no corner of society is untouched, whether that means damage to citizens' health from the virus itself, damage to local businesses and the economy due to shutdowns, or damage to our communities' spiritual direction because of reduced connections with others.

We write today in support of one potential remedy that will assist the most vulnerable Ohioans. Senate Bill 8 provides an avenue for expanding broadband access, which will help our communities recover from the pandemic, and bring our people closer to the exciting educational, spiritual and medical opportunities afforded by it.

Over one million Ohioans lack broadband access, many in rural or Appalachian communities. Additionally, there are impoverished residents of Ohio cities and suburbs for whom broadband could serve as a lifeline.

Increasing broadband access helps bring more learning opportunities to our area for everyone, including children. These opportunities are much needed as we face a major "skills gap." This is the mismatch between the skills that employers need in their employees and the skills that job seekers actually possess.

Why is that important? Studies show that jobs requiring a postsecondary degree, credential or certificate pay more, allowing parents to provide better for their children. Broadband opens up more work from home opportunities, helping parents to be more present in their children's lives while maintaining employment. Also, adults with a degree or credential have a lower unemployment rate than those without, and stable employment helps strengthen families and communities.

Broadband also opens up educational options to children and adults. We have all heard sad anecdotes about children sitting in their parents' cars trying to access library or business WiFi connections after hours to do their homework or a research project. In some parts of Ohio, this quest for a connection often comes with a long drive to and from the hotspot. Such limited access causes children to fall further behind in learning, compared with their more connected peers.

Broadband makes online streaming of church services and programming accessible to more people. Right now, bandwidth limitations deprive more than one million Ohioans, including

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many families and children, of this important opportunity. Additionally, broadband makes telemedicine possible, which improves health care access for both young and old Ohioans.

As church leaders, we take Scriptural mandates seriously and are committed to caring for and speaking out on behalf of children in the most vulnerable circumstances. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this includes those lacking a broadband connection. Thank you and may God continue to bless you as you serve Ohioans.

Looking forward and up,

**Pastor John Bouquet**

Bethel Baptist Church  
Savannah, Ohio

**Pastor John Genszler**

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
Oregon, Ohio

**Pastor Peter Hamilton**

First Baptist Church  
Marysville, Ohio

**Jill Kingston**

Executive Director, Brigid's Path  
Kettering, Ohio

**Nancy Moore**

Co-Founder, Africa Fire Mission  
Cincinnati, Ohio

**Pastor John Cattell**

Disciple's House  
Defiance, Ohio

**Pastor Brandon Hall**

Calvary Baptist Church  
Wilmington, Ohio

**Pastor Kathryn Ketchum**

Community of Faith UCC  
Elyria, Ohio

**Finn Laursen**

Christian Educators Association International  
Avon, Ohio

**Pastor Adam Will**

Mount Hermon United Brethren  
Pomeroy, Ohio