



Advocating for Ohio agribusinesses by creating both a sustainable business climate and added member value through collaborative policy leadership, continuous education and effective communication.

Senator Bob Peterson
Chair, Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee
Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

February 9, 2021

On behalf of the Ohio AgriBusiness Association membership, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 8, which would prioritize funding and last mile connectivity of broadband in Ohio.

Our membership includes the manufacturers and suppliers of fertilizer and plant protection materials, the grain warehousing and marketing industry, the feed and seed industries, as well as companies providing equipment, financing, insurance, consulting, and other products and services for Ohio's number one industry, agriculture.

Most of our member companies are located in rural areas of the state near their farmer customers. While the majority have broadband connectivity at their facilities, it does not compare to the services found in urban areas. Service providers in rural areas often rely on wireless infrastructure that is oversubscribed and less reliable than what is available to urban and suburban locations, resulting in slower internet speeds and spotty connection. As technological advances in agriculture continue to grow, it has become absolutely necessary to have reliable high-speed internet to operate these businesses. Today's agricultural equipment, including tractors, combines, fertilizer applicators and more, utilize an array of sensors and monitors that gather and process information to improve farm productivity. This data is comprehensive and requires significant bandwidth to be fully utilized and shared with partners. Reliable broadband is required for farmers and their agribusiness partners to get the most out of these advanced machines and the valuable data produced.

Another significant aspect of this conversation is the recruitment and retention of employees in rural areas. Recruiting and retaining employees is challenging for everyone, but it becomes more difficult when you are asking future employees to relocate their families to rural areas that do not have sufficient broadband internet service. The pandemic further exposed this issue, as employees were forced to work from home, while their children needed to access school resources via the internet.

Senate Bill 8 will be helpful to incentivize further deployment of broadband to the underserved areas of our state. I appreciate Senator McColley's leadership on this issue and urge this committee to support the bill. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns about our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Henney".

Christopher Henney, CAE
President and Chief Executive Officer

