

**Testimony to the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
for SB 8 • February 9, 2021**

Joe Savarise, Executive Director • Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony from the Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association in support of Senate Bill 8.

On behalf of the Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association (OHLA), and more than 1,500 licensed hotel properties employing 35,000 professionals across our state, I would like to express our industry's support of Senate Bill 8, and the efforts to create the Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program.

Finding ways to ensure broadband service to underserved areas has been a consistent challenge for many businesses in Ohio's strong unique lodging market, which includes a growing number of bed & breakfast operations and other accommodations in rural areas.

Establishing a state and local partnership where townships and municipalities could support individual projects to provide broadband service to specific eligible areas that could include bed & breakfasts and other small, independent lodging operators would greatly benefit many of Ohio's leading tourism communities, and by extension, Ohio's entire travel economy.

Each year, a growing number of travelers are seeking out Ohio's unique experiences and natural beauty, but they still expect and even demand access to communication services that only broadband access can provide, from high-speed internet access to check emails, to using smart phone applications, to enjoying video streaming services while travelling.

SB 8 takes an important step forward in providing more broadband access where it is needed. OHLA supports this legislation, and your efforts. We pledge to work with you, and others working for solutions to help expand broadband, during all discussions in the legislature and in our communities.

Our organization and its members add their voices in respectfully asking for your thoughtful consideration and support of Senate Bill 8 and its provisions that address issues that will allow the continued growth of a strong segment of our travel economy.

Thank you.



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