

Proponent Testimony to amendment in House Bill 430

By Frank Darr

Tuesday, May 31, 2022

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee

Good morning, Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee. My name is Frank Darr, and I am counsel for the Ohio Telecom Association.

The Ohio Telecom Association is a statewide trade association that promotes the common interests of telecommunications companies serving and employing Ohioans. The OTA currently represents 41 telecommunications providers, two wireless providers and more than 100 associate member companies that supply goods and services to the telecommunications industry. In total, the OTA member companies employ more than 16,000 Ohioans.

You have before you a letter submitted by Charley Moses, President of the OTA, concerning the amendment to add Section 4927.102 to the public utilities laws which lays out the reasons for OTA's support.

This amendment would clarify, as the Chairman suggested in Committee last week, an issue that the General Assembly and the industry thought had been addressed in 2015.

At that time and currently, any service other than Basic Local Exchange Service, could be withdrawn by 30 days' notice to the Commission and affected customers. HB 64, from the 131st General Assembly, provided additional language that dealt with the special case of basic local exchange service.

The rule making to implement the legislative directive on withdrawal of basic local exchange service, however, has been at the PUCO for seven years, through three rounds of comments, reply comments, administrative appeals, and a suspended trip to JCARR.

As noted in OTA's submission to the Committee, the amendment is designed to make clear that the PUCO's extension of additional duties to sole carriers of voice service is not Ohio law and to direct the Commission to adopt rules that conform to that understanding.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you, and I look forward to your questions.