



December 8, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Smith  
Chair, Ohio House Finance Committee  
c/o [grace.snider@ohiohouse.com](mailto:grace.snider@ohiohouse.com)

Dear Chairman Smith,

I am writing you today in support of House Bill 378 to create the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program. This legislation would provide support to encourage vital broadband investment and infrastructure expansion in the rural areas of Ohio that remain unserved. This investment is especially needed in the 32-county Appalachian region of Ohio.

As Executive Director of the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA), a Local Development District serving the Appalachian region of eastern Ohio (Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas Counties), I am concerned that rural Ohio, especially Appalachia Ohio is falling further and further behind. According to recent data provided by Connect Ohio, over 93% of the households in the state of Ohio are served by terrestrial, non-mobile broadband service with at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. In the OMEGA 10-county region, only 70% of households are similarly served. In three of our counties, less than 55% of the households have access to this level of broadband service.

Broadband is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. High speed broadband is needed to allow businesses to grow and to compete in the global market and to allow school children to complete their schoolwork and to obtain the skills needed to compete in today's workforce. The internet is used for everything from applying for jobs to making appointments with a doctor's office or for telemedicine in underserved areas.

I enthusiastically support passage of HB 378 to ensure that Ohio residents and businesses can not only survive but prosper in the Digital Economy.

Sincerely,

**Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association**

Jeannette M. Wierzbicki, P.E.

Executive Director

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