

December 8, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Smith
Chair, Ohio House Finance Committee
c/o: 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 financial support to vital broadband investment and infrastructure expansion in the vast areas of Ohio that remain unserved, particularly the 32-county Appalachian region of Ohio.

Many other states have already successfully enacted similar legislation, and I am concerned that Ohio is falling further and further behind.

As the Executive Director of the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission in Waverly, Ohio, we are tasked with updating our regional Strategic Plan document every five years, and broadband access continually is brought up as a weakness in the area by local officials and businesses. In addition, we are constantly being asked to assist with broadband deployment efforts in our twelve-county region but finding a willing and eligible applicant for some of the existing funding is a challenge. House Bill 378 allows both public and/or private entities to be potential applicants which is advantageous.

Broadband is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. The internet is used for everything from applying for jobs to making appointments with a doctor's office. Ohio's children also need broadband to complete their schoolwork and advance their education. Ohio's businesses need it to grow and compete in a global market.

I enthusiastically support passage of HB378 to ensure that Ohio residents and businesses can not only survive but prosper in the Digital Economy.

Sincerely,



John W. Hemmings III
Executive Director