



## Ohio House of Representatives State Representative Jason Stephens, 93<sup>rd</sup> House District

Chairman Oelslager, Chairman Callender, Vice Chair Scherer and Ranking Member Cera, thank you for hearing House Bill 190 today, which establishes the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program.

Although this bill was originally sponsored by my predecessor, I am grateful for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on this important bill today.

Expanding broadband access is more important than ever to the state of Ohio, but the state of Ohio is not on the forefront of internet access when compared to other states. In fact, Ohio is average at best:

\*Ohio ranked 24<sup>th</sup> on BroadbandNow's 2020 ranking of the Best and Worst States for Internet Coverage: <https://broadbandnow.com/research/best-states-with-internet-coverage-and-speed>

\*Ohio ranked 25<sup>th</sup> on US News' Internet Access Rankings:

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/infrastructure/internet-access>

\*27 states have already enacted some form of a broadband funding program:

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2019/state-broadband-policy-explorer>

To summarize, House Bill 190 would set up the framework (via a grant program) to assist construction of broadband infrastructure in unserved areas, including installing new middle-mile or last-mile infrastructure, obtaining construction permits, constructing facilities, purchasing equipment, and installing and testing the service.

Now more than ever, access to broadband internet service is crucial to every Ohioan. From remote learning, to business opportunities, to telemedicine, Ohioans, young and old, who live in areas without access to reliable internet service will continue to be left at a disadvantage. This year the need for reliable internet service has been amplified, as students, parents, professionals and more, were asked to "work from home" there was a key component to that "work" that was very difficult for many people in rural areas of Ohio--reliable access to broadband services.

Reliable Broadband Internet Service for all Ohioans is crucial to the future of Ohio, and in order to achieve reliable broadband throughout Ohio, we must create a mechanism to facilitate internet access in unserved areas of our great state. Passage of House Bill 190 will be a major step in moving Ohio forward to brighter broadband future.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.