

BroadbandOhio

Statements in Support of **House Bill 2**

Mike DeWine, Governor

Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Ohio Southeast Economic Development

"Appalachian Ohio has long suffered from socio-economic disadvantages that stem from an economy that did not adapt like the rest of Ohio. A reliance of natural resource extraction and industries that produce more with fewer people has created tremendous economic disparities with the rest of Ohio. Developing a more diverse economy and creating more information-based jobs is critical. That can only happen built upon a foundation of widely available, reliable high-speed internet.

I am tremendously encouraged that the DeWine-Husted Administration and the Ohio General Assembly have cooperated to take such bold action to fund broadband in unserved and underserved areas through HB2. I am also pleased the program will not be prescriptive but allow diverse geographies to work with providers on appropriate technology solutions. Through this program we can support teleworking, small businesses competitiveness and the education and training of current and future workers, all of which are vital to our regional economy."

– Mike Jacoby, President,
Ohio Southeast Economic
Development

Jackson County Commissioner

"The development of broadband internet is absolutely critical for all Ohioans. Allowing this grant structure to take place could finally mean bridging the gap in the "disconnect" from Southeastern Ohio to the rest of our state. Rural Ohio has suffered in this blight for the better part of a generation. Now is time to show every resident in Ohio that they are worth the investment. I wholeheartedly support HB2 and look forward to the Governor signing this legislation."

– Jon Hensler, Jackson County Commissioner

County Commissioners Association of Ohio

"Ohio counties look forward to investments in broadband access that will help grow local economies and improve Ohioans' lives. House Bill 2 is an important step in making that goal a reality."

– Tim Bubb, Licking County
Commissioner, CCAO President

Pickaway County Commissioner

"I know first hand the frustration of not having reliable broadband service at home. I live less than 25 miles from the Ohio Statehouse. But often, I have to drive to the end of my driveway or farther just to get a decent wireless data connection. HB2 is a great first step to bringing a much needed service to rural homes and businesses."

– Gary Scherer, CPA,
Pickaway County Commissioner

Ohio REALTORS

"We applaud Ohio lawmakers for their action to expand residential broadband access across the state. This is a vitally important, shared benefit for all Ohioans – it's good for property owners and business. Over the course of the past year, the need for reliable internet access has been heightened due to the need for remote work. Additionally, studies indicate that high-speed internet access has a positive effect property values. Passage of House Bill 2 improves our individual and collective connectivity and better positions current and future Ohioans to meet the technological demands of tomorrow today."

– Scott Williams, Chief Executive Officer,
Ohio REALTORS

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Ohio Business Roundtable

"COVID-19 increased our dependence on virtual infrastructure tenfold, however the need for equitable broadband existed long before the pandemic. Internet access is vital for many aspects of our everyday life, however for the business community, effective broadband infrastructure enhances access to jobs, strengthens companies' ability to recruit talent remotely, and provides all Ohioans access to the online marketplace. Furthermore, this bill improves broadband access across the state to ensure that students in both rural and urban areas and those learning remotely have the internet access necessary to be successful. Ultimately, this measure will boost economies at the state and local level, making Ohio more competitive in the virtual world. I applaud Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted, Representative Carfagna and Senator McColley for their leadership on this legislation."

— *Pat Tiberi, CEO,
Ohio Business Roundtable*

Ohio Mayors Alliance

"We appreciate the work of the members of the Ohio General Assembly, and in particular Representatives Carfagna and Stewart in championing broadband expansion in our state and Governor DeWine for signing HB 2 into law. This bill will foster broadband expansion in our local communities, both urban and rural. It is estimated that 700,000 Ohioans still remain without reliable internet access in 2021. The pandemic has exposed how broadband is essential infrastructure in today's economy. We look forward to seeing the progress this bill will promote."

— *Keary McCarthy, Executive Director,
Ohio Mayors Alliance*

CentraComm (Findlay, Hancock County)

"HB2 funding is essential for the continued and sustained growth of economic development and the quality of life of our businesses and citizens. The inequality that exists due to insufficient Internet broadband prevents equal access while hampering the life blood of many regions as they grapple with their ability to be a viable component of the State of Ohio's economic ecosystem. The passage of HB2 would begin to assist telecommunication companies and co-ops reach all businesses and citizens by partially supporting an ROI that makes it feasible for them to consider investing."

With the above thought in mind, a major concern to highlight is that \$20M is a miniscule amount of dollars and may have a minimal impact, especially given the cost per-pole attach rate in rural areas that must be absorbed. A prudent course of action may be for each region to submit their defined costs and have the support of their local telecommunication/co-ops as partners in this plan. Solving this inequitable Internet broadband issue within an acceptable cost/revenue structure would be their mutual goal."

In sum, our State of Ohio Legislature is pursuing a prudent course of action, but the strategy and amount of funding needs to be revisited. Thank you for, at least, beginning this discussion and opening the door for further conversation."

— *Lynn R. Child, President,
CentraComm (Findlay)*

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Lawrence Economic Development Corporation

"We of Lawrence County and Rural Ohio applaud Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted and the Ohio Legislature for HB2. The access to broadband provided by HB2 will remove major barriers to our region's education, employment, and general livelihood. Enhanced broadband can help stem our area's population decline while advancing our economy, and thus our quality of life, as we have access to jobs from other parts of the country."

— *Bill Dingus, PhD, Lawrence
Economic Development Corporation*

Fairfield County Commissioner

"Expanding high-speed broadband in underserved regions will make a positive difference. Job seekers will benefit from being able to use online job search tools, leading to faster re-employment. This will be better for individuals and for businesses who need workers. In addition, high-speed broadband will help local businesses expand their markets. With improved broadband access, people will be able to stay connected for services in the healthcare and educational sectors, too. Just as water or electricity is vital to a thriving Ohio, so is access to high-speed broadband."

— *Steven Davis, Fairfield County Commissioner*

Knox County Economic Development

"As an economic and workforce development practitioner in Ohio, I endorse HB2 as both an economic recovery and resiliency process, as well as a solution to longer term, sustainable economic impact solutions. Not only will highspeed internet access improve the quality of life and quality of work and productivity for Ohioans, but it will also significantly enhance opportunities for the unemployed, underemployed, underserved, and youth populations as they will have greater access to education, training, job search, career advancement, entrepreneurial, and life planning resources. Additionally, access to highspeed internet can be part of a solution to addressing mental and physical health access. Further, highspeed internet will directly improve efforts in advancing tourism, site development, industry recruitment, and overall tax revenue."

— *Vicki Maple, Knox County Economic
Development Specialist*

Ohio Manufacturers Association

"Reliable high-speed internet is a necessity for all Ohio industries, including manufacturing. The pandemic has illuminated the need for Ohio families and businesses to efficiently access broadband in today's technology-based economy. The OMA wholeheartedly supports the creation of the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program created by House Bill 2. We appreciate the leadership of Gov. DeWine and leaders in the General Assembly who worked to create a new public-private partnership that will expand broadband in underserved areas. Ensuring all Ohioans have access to internet service is critical to the state's competitiveness."

— *Ryan Augsburger, President,
Ohio Manufacturers Association*

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Ohio Rural Development Alliance

"The Ohio Rural Development Alliance (ORDA) commends Governor Mike DeWine, State Representative Rick Carfagna, State Senator Rob McCollery, House Speaker Bob Cupp, Senate President Matt Huffman, and the entire Ohio General Assembly for their steadfast and determined work to create a residential broadband program for Ohio. We've long known that poor access to broadband presents many challenges to rural Ohioans, limiting opportunities for economic development, education, access to healthcare and more. The pandemic exacerbated the problem, but also, in what can only be described as a silver lining, created the urgency to push Ohio onto the path of better connectivity. Today's signing of H.B. 2 represents a significant milestone and we join many in celebrating the achievement.

H.B. 2 marks the beginning of a path that will require dedicated focus and resources to bring broadband to all corners of Ohio. ORDA looks forward to continuing our work with the legislature and Governor DeWine as we endure to connect all of Ohio to a brighter future."

— *Ohio Rural Development Alliance*



Ohio Farm Bureau Federation

"The need for reliable high-speed internet across Ohio is vital. We appreciate Gov. DeWine and the General Assembly's commitment to this critical issue. HB 2 helps our state take an important step forward as we continue our push to see all Ohioans have the ability to access the internet."

— *Ohio Farm Bureau Federation*



Ohio Association of Regional Councils

"The Ohio Association of Regional Councils applauds Governor DeWine for signing HB 2 into law. While we know we have a long way to go in making the investments necessary to bridge the digital divide in Ohio, this grant program is a critical first step toward bringing this essential utility to unserved and underserved areas currently unable to equitably participate in the 21st century economy."

— *Jeannette Wierzbicki, President, Ohio Association of Regional Councils, Executive Director, Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA)*



Clinton County Commissioner

"Access to affordable high speed internet is more important than ever. From Ag business to education, from telecommuting to telehealth. The Board of Clinton County Commissioners is grateful for the state leadership team for recognizing this and taking action on this important bill that will make Ohio a better place to live and work."

— *Mike McCarty, Board President, Clinton County Commissioner*

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National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB)

NFIB (National Federation of Independent Business), the state's leading small business association, appreciates the Ohio Legislature for passing and Ohio Governor Mike DeWine for signing House Bill 2 into law. House Bill 2 expands access to broadband internet in rural Ohio and other under-served areas in the state. Accessibility to expanded broadband is critically important to small business owners.

Ohio employers are competing in a global environment. To do so, they need well-educated individuals to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow. Without adequate internet access, many children, tomorrow's workforce, will be left behind. This hurts their future employability, the success of our small businesses, the local economies, as well as Ohio's overall economic success as the pool of qualified and educated workers, is diminished simply by one's geographic location," said Roger Geiger, NFIB Executive Director in Ohio.

Employers are providing increased flexibility for employees to work from home and the need for reliable broadband is greater. Entrepreneurs need certainty their staffs have dependable internet connections that move with the speed of business. We also believe Ohio can expect to see an increase in home-based businesses, especially for those that have been displaced as a result of the pandemic," Geiger continued.

As we continue to see Ohio's economy grow, and with more individuals relying on being online, entrepreneurs are very grateful for the emphasis that was placed on getting this critical legislation passed by the Ohio Legislature and quickly signed into law by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine," he concluded.

— Roger Geiger, Executive Director,
National Federation of Independent
Business (NFIB)

Ohio Library Council

"The Ohio Library Council and Ohio's 251 public library systems strongly support HB 2 and the creation of the residential broadband expansion grant program. Every day, our libraries see first-hand the critical need for this basic utility. This was evident pre-pandemic and became even more profound over the past year. Ohioans frequently turn to their local libraries to get online. At the height of the pandemic, our libraries saw their parking lots filled with rows of cars utilizing the WiFi for school, work, and personal use. We have known for a long time that the digital divide and the need for broadband connectivity is real, and HB 2 is an important step towards connecting all Ohioans to reliable high-speed internet. OLC appreciates the Governor and the General Assembly recognizing this need and making broadband connectivity a priority."

— Michelle Francis, Executive Director,
Ohio Library Council

Ohio Retail Merchants

"Retail supports one out of every four jobs in Ohio while accounting for 18% of the state's GDP. Expanded access to broadband is crucial for the betterment of Ohio's businesses and working families. Our members serve many communities throughout the state which currently lack reliable and widespread internet access. Through broadband expansion, commerce can grow in these parts of Ohio allowing businesses the ability to better serve their customers as goods and services flow more efficiently. We applaud the efforts of the Ohio legislature, Governor DeWine, and Lieutenant Governor Husted who worked together to prioritize this issue and make it a reality."

— Ohio Retail Merchants

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Carroll County Commissioner

"I am writing this letter of support in favor of Broadband Expansion Legislation known as House Bill #2. As you know this particular piece of legislation will create Ohio's first ever Residential Broadband Expansion Program through providing grants to offset construction costs and help facilitate the expansion of high-speed internet and all broadband services to unserved and underserved households in Ohio and specifically in my home county of Carroll.

What you may not be aware of is just under 55% of Carroll County is serviced with adequate internet services. Today, especially during a global pandemic this is unacceptable. When our students had to attend school remotely at different times throughout 2020 and 2021, they struggled. We had students doing school work while sitting in their vehicles connected to a business's WIFI. In other instances, teachers would have to print out material and have the school resource officers deliver the materials to the students while their peers got to learn over virtual instruction. I receive calls often from employees who have been ordered to work from home only to find out they don't have adequate internet service to complete their tasks.

House Bill #2 works to target the problem of last mile connectivity to households where it remains cost prohibitive for private providers to otherwise extend their service. The legislation also contains industry reforms designed to drive increased private investment in broadband infrastructure in unserved areas.

I fully support House Bill #2 and urge you to sign it when it is laid on your desk!"

– Christopher R. Modranski,
Carroll County Commissioner



Mayor of Defiance

"There are few issues more important at this time, than to increase the expansion of broadband, especially into rural areas such as Northwest Ohio. There are studies that show how many Ohioans lack access to highspeed internet throughout the state, brought to light during the pandemic and a statewide problem that must be resolved. More importantly, to me, as the Mayor of Defiance, Ohio, I am concerned first and foremost about my constituents.

From conversations with Superintendent Morton, we know that there are hundreds of students in the Defiance City School District that did not have access to any internet service at home during the last year that remote learning was necessary. These students were reliant on wi-fi services at restaurants, parks, or other family members to get connected in order to virtually attend school, complete lessons and do homework. Defiance is the "urban" center of our county, so without knowing for a fact, one can only assume, that the rural school districts here in Defiance County have had issues that are similar, if not likely, much worse.

Beyond the education issues, there are many other important reasons to connect more Ohioans to highspeed internet, allowing them to work from home, access to TeleHealth and e-commerce services. HB 2 will also help the business community in these under and underserved areas, allowing them the ability to expand business operations, which can lead to higher paying jobs, increased job creation, which leads to increased tax revenue; all of which provide positive outcomes in our local community."

– Mike McCann, Mayor of Defiance

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The Greater Cleveland Partnership

"The Greater Cleveland Partnership greatly appreciates Ohio's collective efforts to expand high-speed internet to underserved and unserved areas across Ohio. Concurrent and related efforts within BroadbandOhio, JobsOhio, and the Ohio General Assembly highlight how seriously state leaders are approaching this critical issue. We have consistently supported the passage of House Bill 2 and welcome its approval. In the state budget, and as outlined in the Executive Budget proposal, it is also imperative we address internet affordability in urban settings across the state – particularly in Cleveland and surrounding communities."

– *The Greater Cleveland Partnership*