



**SB 225 Ohio Broadband Grant Program (Schiavoni, Eklund)  
Proponent Testimony (written only)  
Ohio Municipal League & Ohio Township Association**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Finance Committee, on behalf of our members, we would like to offer our support for Senate Bill 225, which would create the Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program and appropriate \$50 million annually for that purpose, including up to \$5 million to eligible local governments, businesses, nonprofits and co-ops to bring broadband infrastructure to unserved areas of the state. Most importantly, the funding for this important legislation will come from an existing revenue stream - the Third Frontier program within the Development Services Agency.

The use of internet entwines our daily lives in all areas - education, employment, development, and banking. The 28 percent of Ohio citizens without access to broadband are deprived of educational, employment and training opportunities, public safety and healthcare resources. As pointed out in sponsor testimony on March 6 by Senators Schiavoni and Eklund, this legislation is based on a similar, successful grant program in Minnesota which has provided broadband to over 30,000 households. In one round of funding the Minnesota program, the state's investment of \$26 million leveraged an additional \$34 million in private and local funding.

SB 225 would allow for this public/private partnership to get broadband in underserved areas of this state, like the Appalachian region. Areas without internet are economically underserved, both due to a lack of e-commerce and because research shows that the millennial workforce is not choosing to reside or work in communities without access to quality and reliable broadband services. Senate Bill 225 would give both the private and public sector the ability to bring broadband access to the 300,000 Ohioans currently without internet access. Local governments, in particular, understand the urgency of getting broadband to the unreached areas of their communities. The Ohio Broadband Development Grant Program would give municipalities and townships a financial tool to aid in securing broadband access for their residents.

We appreciate Sens. Schiavoni and Eklund's recognition of the need to bring broadband to the unserved areas of the state for creating a tool local government can use to overcome the existing cost barrier. As stated by the sponsors in testimony, ensuring high-speed broadband capability will help our entire state remain competitive nationally and continue to be a desirable place to live, work and visit.

The Ohio Municipal League and the Ohio Township Association strongly support SB 225 and respectfully request your favorable passage. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions about our position on this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Respectfully,

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