



**SB 8 (McColley) – Broadband Expansion Program Proponent
Testimony (Written Only)
Ohio Municipal League & Ohio Township
Association
February 2, 2021**

On behalf of our members, we are writing to offer our support for Senate Bill 8, which would establish the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program within the Ohio Development Services Agency.

Our associations continue to advocate for reliable and affordable high-speed internet (or broadband access) for all of Ohio. Internet access has become a necessity for Ohioans' daily lives, offering crucial, life-improving services, such as educational and employment opportunities. Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohioans have come to rely on internet access more than ever as millions of residents have been working and schooling from home for the better part of a year.

Even as access to the internet has become even more critical, such access continues to be an issue for local governments and their residents. The OML and OTA supported House Bill 13 last General Assembly, the basis for Senate Bill 8, and appreciate Senator McColley's commitment to the effort to expand access to broadband across the state.

Senate Bill 8 establishes a broadband expansion grant program within the Development Services Agency (DAS). Within DAS, the bill would establish the Broadband Expansion Program Authority to reward \$20 million in grants to eligible projects to fund the expansion of broadband access, requiring that the project include the construction of last mile broadband infrastructure. Additionally, the bill provides local governments with the means for direct application to the Development Services Agency through a board of county commissioners.

Senate Bill 8 will help ensure local governments get much-needed broadband access to their residents with support from the state. The Ohio Municipal League and the Ohio Township Association support Senate Bill 8 and urge the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee to support this bill. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns about our position, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

Kent Scarrett
Executive Director
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