

Thursday, June 17, 2021

The Honorable Governor Mike DeWine
Office of the Governor
State of Ohio

The Honorable Representative Scott Oelslager
House District 48
Ohio House of Representatives

The Honorable Senator Matt Dolan
Senate District 24
Ohio Senate

The Honorable Speaker Bob Cupp
House District 4
Ohio House of Representatives

The Honorable Representative Phil Plummer
House District 40
Ohio House of Representatives

The Honorable Senator Theresa Gavarone
Senate District 2
Ohio Senate

The Honorable Senate President Matt Huffman
Senate District 12
Ohio Senate

The Honorable Representative Erica C. Crawley
House District 26
Ohio House of Representatives

The Honorable Senator Vernon Sykes
Senate District 28
Ohio Senate

Dear Governor, Speaker, Senate President and Conference Committee Members:

The undersigned are members of the Greater Cleveland Digital Equity Coalition, a collective initiative by Cleveland's corporate, philanthropic, local government, K-12 and higher education, health care, workforce, and community-based and advocacy organizations to narrow the digital divide in Greater Cleveland.

We are writing to express our disappointment at the Ohio Senate's decision to strip all 2022-23 funding for broadband access programs from Am Sub House Bill 110, while adding problematic language regarding "government owned networks" that can only undermine the efforts of many Ohio communities, including ours, to promote broadband access, affordability and adoption. This amendment was added to the biennial budget bill with no hearings or public discussion.

We call on the leadership of the Ohio House and Ohio Senate, acting through the Conference Committee, to:

- Completely remove the language added to the bill by the Senate Finance Committee's Amendment SC4546-1 ("Government-owned broadband networks");
- Restore the \$190 million originally approved by the House for 2022-23 funding of BroadbandOhio's Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Program; and
- Add significant additional funding for BroadbandOhio to support efforts by Ohio communities, urban as well as rural, to ensure that we have affordable internet options for lower income households, and to promote broadband adoption and digital literacy (\$50M outlined in Investing in Ohio Initiative).

We also call on Governor DeWine, if the language added to the bill by the Senate Finance Committee's Amendment SC4546-1 is not removed in the Conference Committee, to exercise his authority to remove it by means of a line-item-veto.

The Greater Cleveland Digital Equity Coalition is concerned that the effect of HB110, in its current form will be to prevent Cuyahoga County, the City of Cleveland, and numerous other local jurisdictions from implementing much-needed community broadband initiatives and public-private broadband partnerships, and even prevent our plans to leverage federal funds to address the county's digital divide through broadband deployment, broadband adoption, and digital inclusion efforts.

We respectfully seek your support of our position.

Sincerely,



Wanda Davis, ASC3: Digital Literacy and Technology Training Center



Elaine Tso, Asian Services in Action (ASIA)



Kelsey Bergfeld, Advocates for Ohio's Future



John Zitner, Friends of Breakthrough Schools

Councilmember Blaine Griffin, Cleveland City Council, Ward 6

Council President Kevin Kelley, Cleveland City Council, Ward 13



Mayor Frank G. Jackson, City of Cleveland



C. Curtis Timmons, Cleveland Metropolitan School District



Danielle Sydnor, Cleveland NAACP



Tania Menesse, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress



Forrest Faison, M.D., Cleveland State University



John W. Mitchell, CONNECT



Claire Rosacco, Cuyahoga Community College



County Executive Armond Budish, Cuyahoga County



Cuyahoga County Public Library
cuyahogalibrary.org

Tracy R. Strobel, Cuyahoga County Public Library



Dorothy C. Baunach, DigitalC



Craig Arnold, Eaton



Jennifer Dodd, Ph.D., Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio



Denise VanLeer, Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation



Bethia Burke, Fund for our Economic Future



Allison L.E. Wallace, Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association



Baiju Shah, Greater Cleveland Partnership



Floun'say Caver, Ph.D., Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority



Jamar Doyle, Greater Collinwood Development Corporation



Jose Feliciano, Hispanic Roundtable



Grady Burrows, HIT in the CLE



Ray Leach, Jumpstart



Jenice Contreras, Northeast Ohio Hispanic Center for Economic Development (NEOHCED)



pcsforpeople

Bevin Bowersmith, PCs for People



Ronn Richard, The Cleveland Foundation



Lawrence Hatch, The Glenmede Trust Company, N.A.



Kurt Karakul, Third Federal Foundation



Towards Employment

Jill Rizika, Towards Employment



August A. Napoli, United Way of Greater Cleveland



Urban League of
Greater Cleveland

Marsha A. Mockabee, Urban League of Greater Cleveland



Craig Dorn, Youth Opportunities Unlimited