



# City of Barberton

Founded 1891

6/16/2021

Senate President Matt Huffman  
Senate Building  
1 Capitol Square, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Opposition of Municipalities Ability to Operate Broadband Systems

Dear President Huffman:

Please accept this letter as follow-up to my first letter dated June 11, 2021. As Mayor of the City of Barberton, I am writing to express our strong opposition to the amendment (SC4546-1) I sub. HB 110. Provisions of the Ohio Senate Omnibus Budget Amendment would effectively prohibit in the State of Ohio the new construction of public-owned broadband networks, and the ongoing provision of broadband services provided by public-owned networks such as Fairlawn Gig and Hudson's Velocity Broadband, thereby harming the ability for Ohio's residents and businesses to participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital economy.

Broadband has proven to be an essential service for Ohioians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, supporting schools, safety forces, healthcare, economic development, and compete in today's economy, providing for:

- critical communication between our public safety forces, including advanced-911 systems,
- the competitiveness of our businesses and the ability to attract and retain business and employment opportunities in our State,
- access to meaningful educational opportunities for all Ohioans,
- a level playing field where Ohioans from all socio-economic backgrounds can obtain the tools they need to succeed,
- enhanced security to ensure that personal and business data of Ohioans is secure,
- access to high-quality medical services from anywhere,
- advances in new technologies for Ohio to become an active player in our global economy, particularly in areas like autonomous transportation, enhanced security protections and medical advancements.



William B. Judge, Mayor

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The Public-Owned Broadband Restriction Amendment is yet another infringement upon the home rule authority of municipalities and charter counties, like the City of Barberton, that use such authority to provide for the health, safety and welfare of their residents. This amendment further prohibits political subdivisions, including those with already-established networks, from utilizing federal funds, including the billions being received by political subdivisions in Ohio under the American Rescue Plan, on public-owned broadband systems, at a time when those funds can be used to connect Ohioans to the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital economy.

The Public-Owned Broadband Restriction Amendment was added to the Ohio Senate Omnibus Budget Amendment at the twelfth hour, in an attempt to place the profits of a handful of companies ahead of the health, education, safety and welfare of Ohioans, with absolutely no public discussion, debate, or even a representative's names attached to the amendment.

In summary, the health, education, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of Barberton require the unfettered ability of the city to provide affordable, reliable and sufficient broadband services at levels that ensure the needs of its residents and businesses can participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital economy and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William B. Judge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

William B. Judge M.A., M.B.A.

Mayor

City of Barberton

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