Testimony Before the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
November 17, 2020
Submitted by Philanthropy Ohio

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Williams and Members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee. My name is Claudia Herrold, and I am the Chief Communications and Public Policy Officer at Philanthropy Ohio, a statewide association of foundations that has worked for many years to impact education and health policy in the state as we lead and equip Ohio philanthropy to be more effective, powerful change agents in our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement in support of Substitute House Bill 13, which aims to expand broadband connectivity to communities of need throughout the state. Philanthropy Ohio and its over 1,500 members across all philanthropic fields aims to lead and equip Ohio philanthropy to be effective, powerful change agents in our communities, and this legislation complements these efforts through this comprehensive public-private broadband partnership.

With over 1 million Ohioans lacking reliable access to broadband and the increasing uncertainty around COVID-19, our most vulnerable Ohioans are experiencing a severe disadvantage in learning opportunities, economic development, workforce preparedness, and achieving improved health outcomes through innovations such as telemedicine.

As a result of the Covid-19 virus 1.7 million of Ohio's PK-12 students were physically out of school and many of these continue to learn at home as the virus continues its surge and until the virus curve is flattened. The negative impact on students –especially those suffering inequalities and those with special needs – is being significantly impacted due to lack of access to devices and connectivity providers, teachers who are not prepared to teach effectively remotely and parents who are being challenged by multiple demands and cannot help their students. We at Philanthropy Ohio are doing our part to help address these situations across the state, as we partnered with the Ohio Department of Education to create The Ohio Collaborative for Educating Remotely and Transforming Schools Fund, with philanthropic organizations contributing $1.5 million matched by ODE as part of RemotEDx. The Collaborative Fund is a component of *RemotEDx*, a newly formed exchange, network and suite of supports that seeks to provide more students with high-quality, personalized remote, hybrid and blended education opportunities and to serve more educators with job-embedded professional learning experiences.

The goal of this partnership is to help schools and districts improve remote education practices and outcomes and to use remote education as a catalyst for re-imagining and re-engineering the delivery of high-quality caring, teaching and learning opportunities for Ohio's students, with a specific goal of addressing inequities. The first round of grantees included 28 projects receiving funds amounting to more than $3.1 million and reaching 788,331 students. Sub HB 13 can further the goal of bringing effective remote learning to all our students.

We also support the bill because of the way the pandemic has impacted health care, as it is clear telehealth services have become critically important in addressing the health of Ohioans in a safe manner. However, Ohioans can only take care of their behavioral and physical health needs if they have ready access to telehealth, a significant problem in Ohio's rural and remote areas. The high-quality broadband access, developed under Substitute HB 13, is integral to the facilitation of telehealth use across the state and without this access, these innovative services will go unrealized by those most in need.

Philanthropy Ohio will continue our work to address the highest needs in our communities, including broadband expansion, and we strongly encourage your support and passage of Substitute House Bill 13.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony and please be in touch if I can provide any further information.