

Village of New Boston

3980 Rhodes Avenue

New Boston, Ohio 45662

OFFICE OF

William D. Williams, Jr.
Mayor

Phone (740) 456-4103

December 16, 2020

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

RE: AEP Ohio's GridSmart Phase 3 Application Broadband Access Proposal

Case # 19-1475-EL-RDR

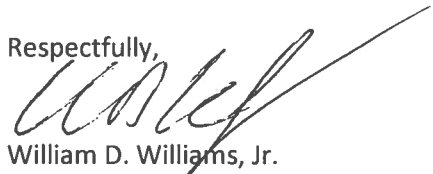
Dear Commissioners:

AEP Ohio has submitted a proposal as part of its GridSmart Phase 3 application that would provide for expanded broadband access in rural areas of the state. The broadband access is critical for our students to learn, our businesses to grow and our communities to prosper.

AEP Ohio is building a fiber network which will allow internet service providers to tap into their fiber network. This could be used to provide high-speed internet access to smaller rural communities. This "missing link" will allow internet service providers to focus their investments on providing access to Ohioans currently without high-speed internet.

Mayor's Partnership for Progress has lists "Expanding the Accessibility of Broadband" as one of their top priorities for 2021. Appalachian Ohio continues to have the lowest rate of cellular and internet connectivity in the state. Without high-speed internet access that is affordable and wide-spread, rural America is met with a persistent digital gap that drives inequality. The Mayors' Partnership for Progress advocates for commissions such as yours, as well as state and federal governments to play an active role in policy and funding to close this gap. I ask that you approve AEP Ohio's request and help bridge the digital divide.

Respectfully,



William D. Williams, Jr.
Mayor
New Boston

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Summary: Public Comment of Mayor William D. Williams Jr. on behalf of Village of New Boston, via website, electronically filed by Docketing Staff on behalf of Docketing