



American Planning Association
Texas Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

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Thank you, Chairman Paddie, for the opportunity to present the following information from the American Planning Association - Texas Chapter. My name is **Chance Sparks** and I represent the American Planning Association - Texas Chapter, and we are testifying **in favor of HB5**. The Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association (APATX) represents public and private sector planners, planning academics and students, elected officials, and citizen planners in the great state of Texas.

APATX would like to thank Governor Abbott and the Legislature for making broadband access a priority this session. HB 5 is an essential step in coordinating the state's response to the digital divide. Those of us in the planning profession have seen firsthand how the lack of broadband infrastructure threatens the state's long-term economic viability, particularly in rural and low-income areas, and for communities of color. Economic development is driven by access to critical infrastructure, and broadband access is a key deciding factor job creators look for when choosing to relocate to Texas.

Our members are well versed in analyzing spatial and geographic data to measure obstacles to economic growth. The mapping component of HB 5 is an important data collection tool needed to fully understand and assess the shortcomings of the state's broadband infrastructure. Local communities need this data to better plan for economic development opportunities and broadband infrastructure.

Creating a dedicated broadband office will ensure information on broadband infrastructure is best delivered to local communities and the public. More importantly, a broadband office will give communities a place to turn to in state government for broadband information and resources. Data and information are the critical components for responding to the lack of broadband infrastructure. HB 5 collects and disseminates the information in the most efficient and effective way possible. APATX and its members are dedicated to providing our vast knowledge of city planning to address the digital divide for all Texas communities.

Once again, I'd like to thank Governor Abbott and the Legislature for working together to make broadband access a stated priority this session. The digital divide is an issue that threatens to derail the state's exceptional growth unless we come together and address the issue at the state level.

Respectfully submitted,

Chance Sparks, AICP, President
American Planning Association - Texas Chapter