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19 January 2021

Chair Gene Pelowski Jr.  
House Industrial Education and  
Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee

Via: e-mail

Ref: HF 14, Funding for Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program

Dear Chair Pelowski,

On behalf of the Minnesota Telecom Alliance (MTA), I am writing in support of House File 14, which would fund Minnesota's nation-leading Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program with \$60 million for fiscal year 2022 and \$60 million for fiscal year 2023.

The MTA membership is a mix of family-owned companies, cooperatives, privately-held companies, and publicly-traded companies. While MTA members have many different corporate structures, one thing we have in common is our commitment to serving rural Minnesota.

Our members have vast experience with the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program and have participated in the program since its inception. The program is vital to ensuring all Minnesotans have access to quality broadband in the future. Telecommunications networks are constantly evolving. Federal dollars and private provider investment go to upgrading and expanding networks—but those dollars are not enough to reach the hardest-to-serve customers in the most rural parts of our State. The Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program is imperative to reach those customers.

One of the most important points of this bill is that it provides funding for both years of the biennium. As you know, we have a very short construction season in Minnesota. It can be difficult to convene stakeholders and plan quality projects when we are aiming at the construction season in just one year. In contrast, multi-year funding allows discussions to happen between providers and communities that would not otherwise happen. Having two years' worth of funding will allow applicants to plan ahead and thereby lead to a higher number of quality applications.

The MTA looks forward to working with the Legislature and Governor to truly obtain border to border broadband in Minnesota. Thank you for your support of House File 14.

Cordially,

Brent J. Christensen  
President/CEO