



April 2, 2024

The Honorable Rep. Ginny Klevorn, Chair
House Committee on State and Local Government Finance and Policy
581 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Klevorn and Members of the House Committee on State and Local Government Finance and Policy,

The City of Saint Paul is writing in support of the **Equal Access to Broadband Act HF 4182**.

The Equal Access to Broadband Act will allow local governments like the City of Saint Paul to negotiate franchise agreements for use of the public rights-of-way by broadband providers. Minnesota communities have a 44-year history of franchising cable TV providers, and this bill will modernize legislation to continue the benefits of franchising for our residents, businesses, schools, and nonprofits. Local franchising is a proven way to ensure complete buildout provisions, no redlining or cherry picking, faster upload and download speeds, non-compliance provisions, local oversight of commercial users in streets and on public assets, and local customer service resolution.

In addition, HF 4182 will modernize the funding structure of local community television. The City of Saint Paul's Comcast Channel 18 and 859 rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees. This funding supports diverse local coverage that empowers residents to engage in our community. This programming includes government meeting broadcasts, candidate and election programming, community event and festival coverage, business and chamber of commerce updates, education and health updates, and local news, sports, art, music, and nonprofit programming. This programming has become essential with the loss of local newspapers in many markets. While our programs are distributed across many digital platforms, franchise fees are paid ONLY on traditional cable TV service, which is fast shrinking. Franchising broadband will level the playing field and provide ongoing funding to continue serving the needs of our community.

Please let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community!

Sincerely,

Jaime Wascalus
Chief Information Officer
City of Saint Paul