



April 4, 2024

**Re: Support for the Equal Access to Broadband Act, HF 4182 (Freiberg)**

Dear Chair Klevorn, Vice Chair Huot and members of the House State and Local Government Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of our 838 member cities, the League of Minnesota Cities appreciates the opportunity to provide our comments in support of the Equal Access to Broadband Act, HF 4182 (Freiberg). The bill includes important provisions that will allow local franchising authorities to make the decision to franchise internet service providers, which will allow cities to ensure all residents receive the same broadband quality of service and access to broadband from providers who utilize local public rights of way to deliver their service.

Since the 1973 Minnesota Cable Act, Minnesota cities through their local franchising agreements with cable providers enforce negotiated agreements between carriers and local communities for carriers to provide service. Local franchises ensure buildout requirements to all residents in an area, not just the highly affluent or those in an urban area and these agreements are made in the interest of the public to allow access to taxpayer-funded rights of way. Importantly, a big reason we have any semblance of internet service in many areas of our communities is due to buildout requirements in local franchise agreements made between cable providers and cities, which provided the foundation for more ubiquitous coverage of coaxial cable internet service.

HF 4182 updates Minnesota telecommunications statutes to reflect the changing conditions of the market as more and more internet service providers seek access to our public rights of way across the state to deliver service by extending local franchising authority to include internet service providers. The provisions in HF 4182 will give local franchising authorities greater authority to manage valuable real estate in the public right of way, receive reasonable compensation for the use of the public right of way, and ensure buildout requirements to address digital inequities in our communities.

The ability to franchise internet service providers will allow cities to ensure all residents receive high quality broadband service, promote equal access to broadband, address digital equity and inclusion goals, and better manage local public rights of way. Please join us in supporting the HF 4182.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Lightfoot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

Daniel Lightfoot  
Intergovernmental Relations Representative  
League of Minnesota Cities