

Dear Chair Klevom and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee

We, the Rocori Area TV cable commission, are writing in support of The Equal Access to Broadband Act HF 4182/SF 4262.

The Equal Access to Broadband Act will allow all local governments to negotiate franchise agreements for use of the public rights-of-way by broadband (internet) providers. Our community has benefited from having a local community channel for 40 years. This bill will modernize legislation to continue the benefits of franchising for our residents, businesses, nonprofits and our Rocori school.

HF 4182/SF4262 will modernize the way our local Community Television can be funded. Rocori Area TV and community television stations across the state rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees to support coverage of city government meetings, sports, news, business and chamber of commerce announcements, community events and festivals, music, arts, nonprofits and more that allow residents to engage in our community. This programming has become essential for many residents to stay in touch with what is going on in their community. This also helps to provide clarity and accountability for local boards of government and school. While our programs are distributed on many digital platforms including our website, Facebook, and Youtube, franchise fees are paid ONLY from traditional cable TV service. We would like to note that the fees we are collecting from traditional cable are RAPIDLY decreasing year to year. Franchising broadband will provide ongoing funding to continue serving the needs of our community. If a bill like this is not passed, the cost of streaming local city meetings, advertising events, and much more will fall 100% onto the city governments within the next few decades. Many cities may decide against covering this cost, and residents will no longer be able to view their local council meetings without attending them in person. We hope you see the benefits our communities enjoy by having this service, and we would like to ensure that our communities continue to enjoy these benefits long into the future.

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

Sincerely,

Boim Michalski / Joe Jelovnik