



January 18, 2021

VIA E-MAIL - rep.gene.pelowski@house.mn

Representative Gene Pelowski, Jr.,
Chair, Industrial Education and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee
491 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Pelowski and Members of the Industrial Education and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), I am writing in support of [H.F. 14](#), transfer of \$60 million dollars in fiscal year 2022 and again in fiscal year 2023, from the general fund to the border-to-border broadband fund account.

While we know a “digital divide” has existed longer than the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the most critical opportunity gaps in education at this time is the uneven access to the devices and internet access vital to learning online. The MSBA urges the legislature to continue to fund the border-to-border broadband program to address the long-term need for affordable, high-speed broadband for all families and include funding to provide targeted, individualized support to families to ensure students can fully participate in distance, remote, e-learning, and online programs offered by school districts.

The COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that technology-supported learning will be part of the future of education in Minnesota, and that all children must have access. Despite creative and private-public funding efforts in 2020, the digital divide is a barrier that shines a light on the equity gap. All Minnesota districts have distance learners, and it is our responsibility to provide them with accessible and reliable learning technologies to replace the accessible and reliable classroom learning communities.

Thank you for recognizing this need. I welcome the opportunity to provide you additional information or answer questions to help inform your decision.

Sincerely,

Denise Dittrich

Kimberley Dunn Lewis

Director of Government Relations

Associate Director of Government Relations