



January 20, 2021

Re: HF 14 – Resources for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant program.

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

The League of Minnesota Cities supports HF 14 and respectfully requests that members support efforts to provide additional resources for increasing access to reliable broadband. HF 14 provides an additional \$60 million in fiscal years 2022 and 2023 for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program.

Reliable broadband internet access is essential infrastructure needed by cities to compete in a global digital economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of broadband as Minnesotans work and study from home due to the pandemic. Cities across Minnesota are working diligently to preserve their local economies and protect residents amid the pandemic. Residents continuing business operations and students learning at a distance must have reliable broadband access to succeed.

However, many communities in Minnesota lack the infrastructure needed to provide reliable broadband at affordable prices. Because of high fixed costs for broadband infrastructure, low population density, and lack of return-on-investment for private sector providers, many cities especially in greater Minnesota have found it impossible to facilitate broadband access. State resources outlined in HF 14 will help address the digital divide and put Minnesota one step closer to providing reliable broadband access to all Minnesota homes and businesses.

Increasing state investment in broadband deployment is now more critical than ever considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the League of Minnesota Cities appreciates the attention the Legislature has shown on this issue. Additional funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant program outlined in HF 14 will provide much needed assistance to communities and bolster local and regional economic development. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that broadband is invaluable infrastructure for Minnesota communities, their residents, and their businesses. Please join us in our support for HF 14.

Thank you for your consideration and your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Daniel Lightfoot'.

Daniel Lightfoot
Intergovernmental Relations Representative
League of Minnesota Cities