



March 17, 2016

Re: HF 2381 (Baker): Broadband grant application process amended, report required, and money appropriated

Dear Chair Gunther and Members of the House Greater Minnesota Economic & Workforce Development Committee:

We would like to express our unified support for funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Development Program included in House File 2381 (Baker). It's been said that expansion of broadband internet access is to the 21st century what rural electrification was to the 20th century. Increasing access to high-speed internet service is seen as a crucial way to keep Minnesota competitive, grow jobs, deliver education services, and improve our state's quality of life.

For Minnesota to achieve competitive broadband speeds across the state and broadband adoption, the State must continue to make it a priority to fund broadband infrastructure development. The continuation of the grant program would allow for additional partnerships with both public and private entities to build out higher cost connections. Encouraging public-private partnerships and providing incentives for broadband investment are key steps to achieving statewide goals and promoting economic development across Minnesota. We look forward to continuing the discussion on details of the program, such as speed criteria and eligibility.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of our organizations.

Respectfully Submitted,

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