



Minnesota Inter-County Association

[www.mica.org](http://www.mica.org)



[www.mncounties.org](http://www.mncounties.org)



[www.mnruralcounties.org](http://www.mnruralcounties.org)

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Rep. Gene Pelowski, Chair  
House Industrial Education and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee

Chair Pelowski and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA), and the Minnesota Rural Counties (MRC), we write in support of HF 14 (Ecklund), that provides \$120 million in funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program.

Broadband funding has been a top priority for counties for several years. As the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, more and more Minnesotans are working, learning, and receiving health care from home and the disparities in broadband access across the state means that too many Minnesotans are unable to access critical, reliable, affordable internet access. The need for increased and sustained investment in broadband is greater now than ever before.

The Governor's Taskforce on Broadband supports funding the grant program at \$120 million in ongoing funding. This funding level is needed to bring service to the unserved and under-served areas of the state and to help meet the state's 2026 speed goals. We know that there is a significant unmet need and thousands of Minnesotans are without access to broadband service across the state. Securing biennial funding – and ideally ongoing funding—for the grant program will allow for better project planning in order to bring service to more households.

The Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program is making great strides in pulling the curtain back on the digital darkness that still exists in many parts of the state. While there is much left to do, we appreciate Rep. Ecklund's leadership on this important issue and urge the committee to support HF 14.

Sincerely,

Rich Sve, Lake County Commissioner  
President, Association of Minnesota Counties

Matt Massman, Executive Director  
Minnesota Inter-County Association

Luke Johnson, Pipestone County Commissioner  
Chair, Minnesota Rural Counties