



To: Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr.
Chair, Industrial Education and Economic Development
Finance and Policy Committee
491 State Office Building
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

From: ECMECC – District #6009-50
531 Elmhurst Ave. So
Braham, MN 55006

1/18/21

Dear Mr. Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the 14-member public school districts who own and operate ECMECC in support of HF14 and its continued funding of Minnesota's Border to Border Broadband grant program. This program has been a model for the nation and has resulted in tens of thousands of students getting the high-speed broadband access that they need to be successful learners in our digital environment. Unfortunately, the area in East Central Minnesota where we provide public education has not benefitted yet from this program and remains a bullseye for unserved families in the state. This has been no more evident than during the pandemic as, collectively, our schools have had to provide hundreds of cellular hotspots to families and still have students who live in areas where even the hotspots won't work. The utilization of temporary access or a total lack of access has negatively affected upwards of 20% to 25% of our student population.

At the same time, we are leaving some students behind, our parents and community members struggle with working from home, participating in telehealth and generally participating in an economy that has gone digital. We know this will continue even as the pandemic subsides. Our communities cannot be left behind. We ask for support of HF14 from you and your committee. I welcome any questions you might have and would be happy to provide answers and details of how the lack of ubiquitous broadband has affected our students and families.

Respectfully yours,

Marc Johnson
Executive Director, ECMECC

ECMECC is 39,000 students, 2800 faculty/administrators and 2200 educational support staff from 14 member school districts and Pine Technical and Community College. ECMECC utilizes technology, information and communication tools to expand educational opportunities for students, staff and community members in East Central Minnesota and beyond. ECMECC was founded in 1983 to make great things happen for students. We still do.