



April 26, 2022

Representative Zach Stephenson, Chair
House Commerce Committee
509 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF4455

Dear Chair Stephenson & members of the committee,

Minnesota Cable is a trade association that represents cable broadband providers statewide. Our members are large, mid-size, and small, and serve areas that are urban, suburban, and deeply rural.

COVID was undoubtedly the biggest stress test that the internet has ever faced with 42% of the workforce going remote and 93% of households engaged in distance learning. Our industry understood that the pandemic presented an ideal opportunity to measure its performance under high stress conditions and we did just that. As a result, we have very good data about the reliability, resiliency, and the quality of our networks. We are happy to share this data with any of you who are interested – but the quick version is that provider networks performed exceedingly well.

This success can be attributed to the cable industry's two decades of consistent investment in and expansion of high-quality broadband networks in Minnesota. The cable industry alone has poured nearly \$20 billion of private capital nationally every year into improving the speeds and capacity of broadband networks, and plan to keep that capital flowing to Minnesota. ISPs work around the clock to add capacity and maintain robust and fast service. For example, cable providers double their network capacity every 24-30 months, ensuring high quality networks long into the future.

Broadband adoption and digital equity remain important priorities of the cable industry. In fact, for the past decade, cable companies have connected over 14 million low-income Americans to the internet through programs that offer steeply reduced rates, discounted computer equipment and training needed to build the digital skills necessary to navigate the internet. ISPs have forged partnerships with numerous community organizations to inform and educate consumers of these programs.

Additionally, the FCC administers a support program which helps low-income families subscribe and stay connected to the internet. The American Connectivity Program (ACP) offers government assistance to many families for the purchase of broadband services and computers. And when combined with existing private programs run by cable providers that offer robust internet service for \$10 – \$20 monthly, eligible families can receive broadband at no cost.

In Minnesota, in preparation for federal infrastructure dollars, the Office of Broadband Development has been tasked with leading digital equity planning for Minnesota. The Office of Broadband has long standing relationships in this work, a positive track record for leading the nation in the work to expand broadband access and is the agency that should continue to be entrusted with this work.

In partnership, government and industry has accomplished a lot without state regulation. We've built high performing, resilient networks that passed the most challenging stress test imaginable. Hard work remains to ensure all Minnesotans have a quality network connection. However, heavy handed and unnecessary regulation will not help finish the job. To the contrary, we've proven that what works is an economic development partnership model with government. In fact, it's worked so well, it's known as the "Minnesota Model" in other parts of the country.

For these reasons, we do not support this bill. Rather, we urge the State to stay the course it's on to achieve universal broadband service for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna Boroff". The signature is written in black ink on a white background with a light gray grid pattern.

Anna Boroff
Executive Director