



CITY OF
SAVAGE
MINNESOTA

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April 2, 2024

Dear Chair Klevorn and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee:

The City of Savage is writing in support of The Equal Access to Broadband Act HF 4182. The Equal Access to Broadband Act will allow local governments to negotiate franchise agreements for broadband providers' use of the public right-of-way. Minnesota communities have a 44-year history of franchising cable TV providers, and this bill will modernize legislation to continue the benefits of franchising for our residents, businesses, schools, and non-profits. Local franchising is a proven way to ensure complete buildout provisions, no redlining or cherry picking, faster upload and download speeds, non-compliance provisions, local oversight of commercial users in streets and on public assets, and local customer service resolution.

In addition, HF 4182 will modernize the funding structure of local community television. Community television is a valuable city service that provides a vital connection to our local communities and covers hyperlocal news not met by regional, state, or national media. It engages residents by providing neutral, unbiased coverage of public meetings, city services, and local elections. And it enriches lives by spotlighting high school sports, local concerts, and community events.

Unfortunately, many community television stations like SAVAGE TV are experiencing significant budget losses due to subscribers abandoning traditional cable services or "cord-cutting." Since the current funding structure is limited to receiving franchise fees and PEG fees from conventional cable TV revenues only, as cable subscribers drop, so does community television funding. We expect our station to face a revenue decrease of 39.5% in 2024. While we distribute our programming on multiple platforms, including cable TV, online streaming, and social media, only the cable operator is required to provide financial support, and only on their traditional cable TV service, not their streaming or internet services.

Please let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community!

Sincerely,

Emily Gunderson
Communications Manager

Cc. Senator Lindsey Port, Representative Hansen