



Suburban Community Channels
2460 County Road F East
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651.747.3801

April 2, 2024

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

Suburban Community Channels (SCC) serves 9 member cities in the northeast metro: Birchwood, Dellwood, Grant, Lake Elmo, Mahtomedi, Oakdale, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township and Willernie. SCC provides staff productions of everything from local sporting events, plays, and concerts to community parades, high school graduations, and local news. We also provide coverage of public meetings to empower citizens to be informed and engaged.

We are 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 nonprofits. 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 media. Community media is a valuable service that provides a vital connection to our local communities and covers hyperlocal news and information 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, concerts, and community events.

Unfortunately, many community media centers like SCC 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 media funding. Without a change to the funding structure, we expect SCC will continue to face revenue decreases each year. 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,

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The top signature is "Mary Kline" and the bottom signature is "Cindy Arko".

Mary Kline, Production & Content Manager, Mary@scctv.org
Cindy Arko, Business Manager, Cindy@scctv.org