



May 9, 2022

Representative Alice Hausman
Representative Michael Howard
Representative Mike Sundin
Representative Samantha Vang
Representative Tama Theis
Senator Torrey Westrum
Senator Rich Draheim
Senator Gene Dornink
Senator Eric Pratt
Senator Kari Dziedzic

Dear House and Senate Conferees,

We have signed this letter because we are mayors from all over the state of Minnesota, and we represent many others. We are Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. We may look at many political issues differently. But when it comes to broadband, we are united. We think alike.

We strongly urge you to use whatever combination of federal and state money you can to close the broadband access gap, experienced most acutely by some 240,000 households in our state. It is vital that we close this gap. We must not see another era of school children going to parking lots near institutions or businesses that have good WIFI. Or see more adults trying and facing futility as they try to work remotely in some areas of our state.

For once, there is plenty of money available. And we are sure you are hearing from lots of lobbyists about the best way to spend that money. Our purpose is to see that Minnesota becomes one of the first states to assure that every household has access to at least the speeds recommended by the Governor's Broadband Task Force. That 100/20 speed is now considered the minimum. We cannot do less.

Without getting into financial details with which all of you are more familiar than we -- including the state surplus, the federal money appropriated before this year, and the hundreds of millions of federal dollars stuck in the federal bureaucracy apparently fully appropriated and on its way here, we just want you to close the gap we now have.

The DEED Office of Broadband Development that handles broadband grants says the total cost for border-to-border broadband is about \$1.3 billion. What is rarely discussed is the cost to a whole generation of school children who do not have access to what's becoming a hybrid model of learning. Without access to high-speed broadband, there is no chance at all for many kids.

And what of the cost to cities around the state when adults find they cannot work from home, even though work patterns have probably permanently changed, and working from home is part of the deal for many? It also matters to the economy of these places, as many discover they need to live somewhere where broadband is accessible.

So please use this unprecedented fiscal era to fully fund the DEED office and make sure we can build out the broadband system statewide as rapidly as possible. This may be one of those rare occasions when a truly bipartisan problem leads to a bold bipartisan solution.

MN MAYORS IN SUPPORT OF INVESTING NOW TO CLOSE THE BROADBAND ACCESS GAP

Mayor Doug Anderson, City of Lakeville
Mayor Tracy Bertram, City of Becker
Mayor Marv Calvin, City of Wilmar
Mayor Shelly Carlson, City of Moorhead
Mayor Ron Case, City of Eden Prairie
Mayor Dr. Mark Dehen, City of North Mankato
Mayor Bill Droste, City of Rosemount
Mayor Brian Holmer, City of Thief River Falls
Mayor Jim Hovland, City of Edina
Mayor Elizabeth Kautz, City of Burnsville
Mayor Jennifer Labadie, City of Shorewood
Mayor Emily Larson, City of Duluth
Mayor Chris Lund, City of Hamburg
Mayor Scott Lund, City of Fridley
Mayor Julie Maas-Kusske, City of Maple Plain
Mayor Mike Maguire, City of Eagan
Mayor Mary McComber, City of Oak Park Heights
Mayor Jeff McCool, City of West Concord
Mayor Tom McKee, City of Corcoran
Mayor Tim Meehl, City of Perham
Mayor Charlie Miner, City of Long Lake
Mayor Johanna Mouton, City of Wayzata
Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas, City of New Brighton
Mayor Kim Norton, City of Rochester
Mayor Ben Schierer, City of Fergus Falls
Mayor Scott Sherman, City of Winona
Mayor Janet Williams, City of Savage
Mayor Dave Smiglewski, City of Granite Falls
Mayor Jake Spano, City of St. Louis Park
Mayor Lisa Whalen, City of Minnetrista
Mayor Brad Wiersum, City of Minnetonka