

To: Senate Agriculture and Rural Development Finance and Policy Committee
Chair, Senator Torrey Westrom
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 1150
Saint Paul, MN 55155

From: The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition
2401 Broadway Ave #1
Slayton, MN 56172



March 2, 2022

Dear Chair Westrom and Committee Members,

On behalf of our member organizations, we write to you today to share our thoughts on **SF 3476**. The Minnesota Cable Communications Association has worked with the Coalition to incorporate suggestions from our member organizations that are reflected in an amendment before you today. These include confirmatory language that grants would only be issued for projects that meet symmetrical speed requirements of 100mbps download and 100mbps upload. This language assures that potential projects would not be built to standards below those of the existing Border-to-Border grant program. Additionally, MCCA included language that would preclude grants from being issued to households that are part of a grant already issued by the Office of Broadband Development for the Border-to-Border grant program.

Despite these changes, the Coalition maintains some reservations about SF 3476. The Coalition is concerned that, with limited funds currently available, pilot project grants would compete against larger, community-based projects in the Border-to-Border grant program. Any grants for this new pilot program would use the same funding source as the Border-to-Border grant program. There is currently \$35 million for FY22 and \$35 million for FY23 from the American Rescue Plan Act's Capital Projects Fund that was allocated by the Legislature during the last legislative session.

The Coalition would strongly prefer that the Legislature use state general fund money from the \$9.3 billion surplus to fund SF 3476. This would ensure that communities that have worked hard to partner with internet service providers for a Border-to-Border grant do not miss out because there isn't enough money in the bank.

The Coalition supports Section 3 of the bill related to broadband easements. This language would streamline the process of rolling out service to households in rural Minnesota.

The Coalition would like to thank MCCA for graciously incorporating the changes listed above. We will continue to work with them as SF 3476 moves through the legislative process.

Respectfully yours,

Jay Trusty
Chair
Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition Members

