



Minnesota Rural Electric Association



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Senator Torrey Westrom, Chair

March 29, 2022

Senator Erin Murphy, Ranking Minority Lead

Members of the Agriculture and Rural Development Finance and Policy
Committee

RE: Broadband Sections of SF 4019

Dear Chair Westrom, Senator Murphy and members of the committee,

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) is the statewide association representing the interests of all 50 of Minnesota's non-profit rural electric cooperatives – which are owned by their members, governed by their members, and operate solely for the benefit of their 1.7 million members around the state.

We thank Chair Westrom for his support for appropriating an additional \$110 million to the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program by allocating the state's remaining portion of the American Rescue Plan Act's Capital Projects Fund. Broadband is an essential service today, and adequate funding for the Border-to-Border Grant program is critical.

In that same vein, we continue to share the concern that the Minnesota Rural Broadband Association has previously raised with regard to the new Line Extension program in Article 2, section 5, and Article 4, sections 1 and 2. With limited Border to Border funds available, line extension grants would compete against larger, community-based projects in the Border-to-Border grant program. We urge that the funding for this new Line Extension program, if enacted, should be funded using state general funds, instead of being taken from Border-to-Border funds.

Finally, we add our voice to the MRBA in supporting other broadband provisions in Article 2, especially section 2, which allow higher state matching funds for low density areas.

Mike Bull, Director
Policy and Regulatory Affairs