



March 20, 2023

Chair Aric Putnam
Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee
RE: Senate File 2169
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3215
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Putnam,

Thank you and the Members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate File 2169.

My name is David Larson, and I am the Government Affairs Director for Cooperative Network. Our members are owned by millions of residents throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin and include member-owned farm supply, dairy marketing, livestock marketing, financial, health care, mutual insurance, processing, electric utility, housing, food, and worker-owned cooperatives, among others.

We appreciate Senator Seeberger and her co-authors for bringing this important bill in front of the Committee to fund broadband infrastructure and deployment via the Border-to-Border broadband grant program. Even though our latest investment in our broadband infrastructure was historic, thanks to the help of a large infusion of federal dollars, more is still needed to reach Governor Walz's goal of universal access to high-speed internet by 2026 in Minnesota, and this bill is a huge step in that direction.

Cooperative Network believes that rural citizens and businesses should have equal access to broadband in Minnesota, and the \$276 million appropriated in Senate File 2169 would be the state's largest investment into broadband infrastructure and deployment in history. This legislation would promote investment and incentives that encourage employers, including cooperatives, to create jobs in rural communities.

This bill would be the latest (and largest) step by the Minnesota Legislature to bridge the digital divide that still exists in Minnesota today.

On behalf of our cooperative members, we respectfully request your support of Senate File 2169.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Larson
Government Affairs Director
Cooperative Network

CC: Members of the Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee