

March 20, 2023

Senator Aric Putnam, Chair
Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development
3215 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue West.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Putnam and Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee Members:

The Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA) is a voluntary association representing fifteen of Minnesota's larger and faster growing counties, including four suburban and eleven Greater Minnesota counties.

MICA supports SF2169 authored by Senator Seeberger. Broadband has become a primary way for households to access every day services including education, health care, employment, transportation, and social connectivity. Reliable, high-speed broadband is also a necessity for businesses statewide including restaurants, local merchants, and non-profits. However, recent data showed over 170,000 Minnesota households have no or inadequate broadband access.

The \$138 million appropriated for FY 2024-25 in SF2169 for Border-to-Border Broadband Development grants, along with increasing the grant maximum up to \$10 million for a single project, is needed to help ensure an adequate financial incentive for achieving broadband infrastructure goals in unserved and underserved areas of the state. We would also support an even higher appropriation level.

County governments have committed significant local resources to expanding Broadband. The increased state appropriations provided in SF2169 will help Minnesota communities fully leverage federal funds and private investments for essential broadband access.

Thank you for the opportunity share our support for universal and equitable high-speed internet access for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,



Matt Massman, *Executive Director*
Minnesota Inter-County Association