



June 12, 2020

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Senator Paul Gazelka
Senate Majority Leader
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3113
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Senator Susan Kent
Senate Minority Leader
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 2221
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Representative Melissa Hortman
Speaker of the House of Representatives
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Representative Kurt Daudt
House Minority Leader
267 State Office Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders:

As members of the American Connection Project Broadband Coalition, we write to urge your strong leadership in connecting all Minnesotans by ensuring that broadband funding is part of the 2020 Special Session global negotiations and the final deal.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has made the urgent need for internet connectivity clear. As millions shifted to work from home; school districts closed and resorted to distance learning platforms; and increasingly, patients sought healthcare through telemedicine platforms to reduce pressure on the healthcare system and reduce risk of unnecessary exposure, internet access has become essential to life.

While Minnesota has made great advances in broadband connectivity in recent years, some 150,000 Minnesota households currently lack any access to the internet. A 2018 report by the Governor's Task Force on Broadband estimated one in five Minnesota rural households are unserved with high-speed broadband, and more than 40 percent are underserved.¹ In today's economy, these communities, children, and families without adequate access are left behind, and the consequences are staggering from an economic, health, education, and social standpoint.

¹ Governor's Task Force on Broadband, 2018 Annual Report. October 2018. https://mn.gov/deed/assets/2018-bbtf-report_tcm1045-354312.pdf

We greatly appreciate your leadership last session in appropriating \$40 million to the Border to Border broadband program. It was a solid down payment on an overall investment. We also appreciate the Legislature's recent bipartisan leadership in discussing an appropriation for digital capabilities including distance learning access, telemedicine equipment and the border to border broadband program (HF-1507 and SF-4494). We believe passing a unified bill that allocates funding to these areas will be essential for the near-term and long-term well-being of our State.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Matthew Wohlman, Sr. Director of State and Industry Affairs at Land O'Lakes via email at mwohlman@landolakes.com.

Sincerely,

Beth Ford
President and CEO
Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Kenneth Holman
President and CEO
CentraCare

Charlie Weaver
Executive Director
Minnesota Business Partnership

Dr. Steven Ommen
Associate Dean, Center for Connected Care
Mayo Clinic

Charles Conner
President and CEO
National Council for Farmer Cooperatives

Kate Johnson
U.S. President
Microsoft

Dave Tierney
Director, State and Local Government Affairs
Bayer

Roger Watchorn
Group Leader, Agricultural Supply Chain,
North America
Cargill

Vince Robinson
Chair
Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition

Marnie Falk
Director of Government Relations
Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare

Kevin Paap
President
Minnesota Farm Bureau

Daniel Smith
President and CEO
Cooperative Network

Dennis Kelly
Head, State Affairs North America
Syngenta