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Business: Masters Social Worker - St. Louis County, and Morcom Township Clerk

Internet Service: Shaky Cell Phone Hotspots.

My Story: We pay \$500 a month for unlimited data for a cell phone connection to AT&T towers. Our kids use slow, unreliable cell phone hotspots for homework. It's nearly unusable during hunting and fishing season or summer holidays when more people are in the area. Our local provider charges \$660 a month for internet. That's 3.5 days of work for me. A rural internet grant or tax break might help costs for home and township work, but we would still be stuck with spotty, unreliable service - and no fix for the real problem.

Our Message:

MRC and MAT are participating members of the Rural Broadband Coalition and support the coalition message for 2018:

"Fund the Border-to-Border Broadband program. No new policy this year."

Goal: The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and its supporters request the 2018 Legislature to fund the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant program with \$51.48 million in 2018 to achieve the state's 2026 broadband speed goal of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 20 Mbps upload. Consistent and stable funding of the grant program is important to allow economic development agencies, local governments and others to be creative and collaborative in their approach to providing broadband services to these areas.

Background: The Legislature has traditionally provided funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program on an annual basis, rather than over the biennium. Last session, the Legislature included \$20 million for the program. The Office of Broadband Development received 70 applications in the 2017 grant cycle totaling over \$50 million in requests for broadband infrastructure projects throughout the state.

The Governor's Task Force on Broadband Report recommends \$71.48 million per biennium in on-going funding over the next four years. This will provide broadband internet speeds of 25 Mbps/3 Mbps to the 252,000 households that currently lack such service—and will help Minnesota achieve its statutory broadband speed goal of connecting all Minnesotans with broadband internet speeds of 100 Mbps/20 Mbps by 2026.

For more information, please contact:

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2017 Broadband Availability in the State of Minnesota

Percentage of Households served by broadband service of at least 25Mbps/3Mbps
Statewide: 88.11%, Rural: 73.45%

