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To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Andrew Havelka and I am the superintendent of Freeman Public Schools located in Adams, Nebraska. Freeman is a consolidated district made up of two villages approximately fifteen miles apart, Adams and Filley. Please accept this letter of support to assist the village of FILLEY in expanding fiber broadband services.

The COVID-19 public health emergency highlighted that access to high-quality internet can enable work, education, and health access, and that individuals and communities that lack affordable access to such high-quality internet are at a marked disadvantage. That became apparent in the Spring of 2020, when Freeman Public Schools was forced to close for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Our school district was able to invest in 1-to-1 technology for each of our students, but could not always rely on high-quality internet. This continued through the 2020-2021 school year as well, where students were asked to continue learning via remote technology when placed in quarantine. That created a challenge, especially when parents were already working from home and multiple students were asked to access the internet.

Rural broadband availability and adoption are also critical to the economic vitality of rural Nebraska and villages such as Filley. The availability of rural broadband can attract and retain younger patrons and lead to greater economic growth, higher household incomes, and small business growth. Utilizing Capital Projects funding to expand the Nebraska Broadband Bridge Grant program will enable the deployment of broadband infrastructure capable of providing 100/100 Mbps broadband in areas of the state lacking broadband of 100/20 Mbps and enable students and other residents in those areas to work at home, participate in online education, access health care via telehealth, and monitor health conditions.

Thank you for considering the addition of fiber broadband services in Filley. I believe it is a worthwhile investment in our village and in the future of Nebraska.

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