Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association

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Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear National Telecommunication and Information Administration,

I am writing to express our strong support of Dairyland Power Cooperative's (DPC) Tri-State Fiber Deployment Project; a multifaceted endeavor that will bring about much needed middle mile infrastructure to predominately rural communities in south-east Minnesota, northern Iowa, south-west Wisconsin, and northwest Wisconsin through the NTIA's Middle Mile Grant Program.

The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association provides government relations, member education, and media services for its membership of 24 electric distribution co-ops, one generation and transmission cooperative (Dairyland Power Cooperative), and their nearly 600,000 member-owners. With nearly 10% of electric consumers being electric cooperative members – more than 263,500 farms, residences, and businesses - we predominantly serve the state's rural areas where on average, household income trails the state average by 11.4%.

The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association is fully cognizant of the significance of middle mile infrastructure to expand internet networks closer to unserved and underserved communities while offering equal opportunity for internet service providers to connect to last mile infrastructure in a cost-effective manner, ultimately promoting economic prosperity and closing the digital divide. DPC is committed to having a positive impact in service territories represented by WECA's members and surrounding areas by implementing middle mile infrastructure that will increase competition among local internet service providers, and subsequently lower costs and offer increased options for citizens.

Sincerely,

Rob Richard
Director of Government Relations
Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association