

Fayette County Economic Development and Tourism

July 16, 2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer
Matt Behrens
Deputy Chief Information Officer
State of Iowa
200 East Grand Ave
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Deputy Chief Behrens:

As the Director for Fayette County Economic Development & Tourism, it is my pleasure to write a letter in support for the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program (Notice of Funding Availability #006) application being submitted by Hawkeye Interconnect Company.

The COVID-19 pandemic made clear that there is a desire for individuals to relocate into rural areas that offer a slower pace living style and recreational opportunities. Fayette County sits in the heart of that opportunity. For that to be a possibility, Broadband access is a must.

As a local economic development partner, we see this effort to expand Broadband in rural Fayette County and Northeast Iowa as critical to our efforts to grow our population, support our workforce, and expand business development. Existing service for connectivity available to residents and businesses in the proposed funding area are inadequate and do not currently meet their needs. This effort, if funded, will support service of current and new customers in rural portions of Fayette County, creating opportunities for residents and businesses for distance learning and tele-work.

Expanding Broadband access in our rural areas is a key objective of Fayette County Economic Development & Tourism, therefore, I fully support the efforts of Hawkeye Interconnect Company and their partners as they seek external funding to support the proposed project

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Mallory Hanson, Director
Fayette County Economic Development and Tourism

GUNDERSEN
PALMER LUTHERAN
HOSPITAL AND CLINICS

Office of the Chief Information Officer

Annette Dunn
200 E. Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50309

Good Day,

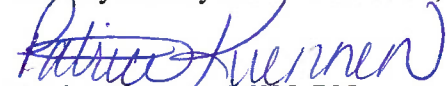
Please accept this letter of support for Hawkeye Telephone Company's application to the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability #006 grant opportunity. This grant application requests funding to expand fiber broadband availability in Fayette County. Gundersen Palmer Lutheran Hospital & Clinics is one of six critical access networks put in place by Gundersen Health System (GHS) to provide increased access to underserved rural areas and represents a rural population that would greatly benefit from an award of this grant application.

These critical access hospitals and their associated clinics were constructed to provide care to underserved rural areas, which is best illustrated in the average population per square mile of 36.5 in these communities, which is just 42% of the national average. Expanding Access to Clinical Care Health Professional Shortage Areas is an issue throughout the Midwest, and it widens in the rural counties of Gundersen Palmer Hospital & Clinic's service area. The deficit grows wider with a 2,830:1 ratio for mental health providers compared to state's ratio of 700:1. Primary care provider shortage ratio equates to 2,860:1 compared to the state's ratio of 1,509:1.

Gundersen Palmer's service network includes a critical access hospital and outpatient clinic located in Fayette County, IA; along with additional Rural Health Clinics located in Allamakee and Clayton counties. Hawkeye Telephone Company's proposed broadband expansion would include the underserved areas in Fayette County, which according to US census data as of 7/1/2019 represent a population that broadly lacks access to broadband relative to the state and national averages. In Fayette County, only 76.4% of households possess a broadband connection. The US average for broadband is 82.7%.

Access to broadband plays a vital role in the current state of rural medicine, and that role is continuing to grow as our health system, along with others across the country, continue to expand telemedicine offerings in light of COVID-19. In response to the crisis, GHS instituted Project Phoenix, which set percentage-based goals for telemedicine usage across the entirety of the health system. GHS has committed to extending these goals beyond the pandemic, as a reimagining of care to provide greater access and efficiency for all patients moving forward. An award of the Hawkeye Telephone Company grant program will greatly aid in the scale of this project and allow for the increased telemedicine capacity to be used by rural Iowa patients in underserved areas. To that end, an award of the Hawkeye Telephone Company grant program would also help rural Iowa residents to realize travel-based cost savings. Many of our telemedicine programs would remove the need for patients to drive to their nearest hospital or clinic to receive care, especially those with chronic conditions that require frequent attention.

Thank you for your consideration,



Patrice Kuennen MSN, RN

Administrator ~ Gundersen Palmer Lutheran Hospital & Clinics

Palmer Lutheran Hospital
112 Jefferson Street
West Union, Iowa 52175
(563) 422-3811
Fax: (563) 422-9754

Fayette Clinic
110 King Street
Fayette, Iowa 52142
(563) 425-3381
Fax: (563) 425-4361

Postville Clinic
111 South Reynolds Street
Postville, Iowa 52162
(563) 864-7512
Fax: (563) 864-7511

West Union Clinic
110 Jefferson Street
West Union, Iowa 52175
(563) 422-3817
Fax: (563) 422-5937

North Fayette Valley Community School District

Proud to be NFV

600 N. Pine Street, P.O. Box 73, West Union, Iowa 52175**Phone (563) 422-3851 - Fax (563) 422-3854****www.nfvschools.com****Joe Griffith, Superintendent****Travis Elliott, PK-5 Principal****Micah Gearhart, PK-8 Principal****Lori Westhoff, 9-12 Principal****Betsy Nefzger, Curriculum Director**

July 14, 2021

TO: Craig Schmitt, Plant Manager Hawkeye Telephone Company

FROM: Alex Snyder, Technology Director

RE: Recommendation for Fiber Expansion

Dear Mr. Schmitt,

Please consider this letter to the State of Iowa, which is in support of HTC, and their application for funding through the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability #006. HTC's proposal is to expand fiber networking in areas that include the North Fayette Valley School District. This expansion is critical to ensuring our rural staff and students have access to an affordable and modern internet service. With 38% of our families eligible for the National School Lunch Program, it's integral for our rural students to have affordable internet access with the migration to hybrid and online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that this technology has become a part of our district, it will be critical that our families have access to our online services.

In review of the proposed area, the existing services to residents and businesses are inadequate to serve current needs. In our district, some families have access to high quality internet services, while others do not. The proposed expansion would greatly increase the abilities of our families to move toward modern learning models, and allow them the same access available to those in less rural areas.

I've been with the Technology Department for five years, and can attest to the quality of service and leadership provided by HTC. They have supported our district heavily, and are most deserving of this award to continue to support education in rural Iowa.

Sincerely,



Alex Snyder

Technology Director, North Fayette Valley CSD



Re: Letter of Support for needed Fiber in Rural Residences and Rural Businesses

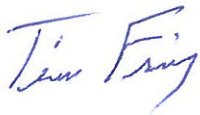
Dear Hawkeye Interconnect Company,

I have learned that Hawkeye Interconnect Company is applying for a grant for installing underground fiber to rural residences and businesses for improving broadband service availability with speeds up to 1 Gbps in portions of Fayette County. I am a rural resident/farmer in the proposed area of fiber expansion and fully support Hawkeye Interconnect Company's grant request due to the great need for improved service in this area.

The current availability of broadband in this area is not sufficient. The current provider in our area is very slow and unreliable. Wireless internet services are not available in the area I live. As the farming industry continues to grow, we must rely on a quality internet service to educate ourselves and keep up daily with all the commodities.

I am thankful for the state providing this opportunity to fund broadband expansion in our area and we recommend Hawkeye Interconnect Company be awarded funding to expand its network to serve our location and many others in the area that currently have inadequate broadband service.

Sincerely,



Tim Frey
15018 Lantern Rd
Fayette, IA 52142