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February 4, 2021

Senator Curt Friesen, Chair  
and Members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee  
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: Broadband Internet Bills

**Support**

*Please include this written testimony from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB 338, LB 388, LB 398, LB 455, LB 456, LB 460, LB 498, LB 600, LB 604 and LB 656.*

Dear Senator Friesen and Members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee:

The League of Women Voters of the United States, as part of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, identified adequate broadband services as a key provision for federal COVID-19 pandemic response legislation, demonstrating broadband access as a basic need for health, economic, and educational success.

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska values the continued focus on expanding and improving broadband access to all parts of our state. We support legislation that will implement a reoccurring grant program that funds broadband development and enhancement in communities currently experiencing no access or limited access to internet services. Additionally, the inclusion of consumer protections, a prioritized approach to dissemination of grants, and the continued inclusion of a wide variety of community stakeholders will have many benefits for rural Nebraskans.

LWVNE views quality broadband access as an important gateway for voters to learn about candidates, complete voter registration online, view legislative sessions and community meetings, and stay informed on issues. In addition to civic engagement, quality internet expands and improves healthcare, education, government, and lifestyle possibilities. It will encourage young professionals to find employment outside urban areas. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, broadband access is not only an economic tool, but a necessary utility.

In Nebraska, this issue has won the collaborative efforts of the Unicameral; the Governor's Office; the Public Service Commission; and a wide variety of stakeholders and advocacy groups, including the Center for Rural Affairs, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Association of County Officials, and Nebraska Farmers Union. As a League, we support not only the legislations' purpose outright, but value it as a model of collaborative work to make true advances for Nebraskans across the state.

Development of this infrastructure is critical to the welfare of our state, in addition to continuing to make Nebraska a great place to work, learn, and live.

Sincerely,

Rachel M. Gibson, LWVNE, Social Policy Committee  
Carol Dennison, LWVNE Director of Social Policy  
Linda Duckworth, LWVNE Co-President  
Dianne Bystrom, LWVNE Co-President