

**Governor's Broadband Task Force/Senator Putnam**

**Thursday, April 18, 2024**

**2:00 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.**

**Room Number: Minnesota Senate Building, Conference Room 3237 (In-person only)**

**95 University Ave. W. Saint Paul, MN 55155**

**Task Force Members Present In-Person:** Chair Teddy Bekele; Bruce Crane Adam Hutchens; Marc Johnson;

Daniel Lightfoot; Paul McDonald; Melissa Wolf.

**Task Force Members Absent:** Ini Augustine; Steve Fenske; Gail Hedstrom; Brian Hood; Briana Mumme; Phil Stalboerger;

David Wolf.

**Others in Attendance In-Person:** Senator Aric Putnam; Commissioner Matt Varilek; John Pollard; Rob Ecklund; John Thoreson; Darielle Dannen; Brent Christenson; Bree Maki; Hunter Pederson; Anna Norcutt Preuss.

1. **Call to order (Chair Bekele)**

Chair Bekele began the meeting.

1. **Welcome and introductions**

Chair Bekele introduced and welcomed Senator Aric Putnam and Commissioner Matt Varilek. A brief history was provided on how the Task Force has been interacting with current bills impacting Broadband in the legislature. The Task Force has wanted to weigh-in on bills, but did have recommendations to lean back on since it was formed late. The Task Force felt it was important to get together and listen to opinions, concern, and support for these bills.

1. **Discussion on legislative bills**

Chair Bekele opened discussion explaining high-level support and concerns bills. Overall, concerns about additional costs to the consumers, about not impacting broadband deployment across the state, the dispersal of (BEAD) funds, affordability of broadband with the American Connectivity Program (ACP) ending, and in general the increase of fees. Generally, support safety for workers needs to be in place. Other Task Force members had no additional comments at this time.

Senator Putnam discussed intent to be more involved with Broadband and jurisdiction. Recognition that issues and concerns with bills are not inherent to broadband, but the increase in something anywhere can make things more expensive to others. Requested precision in these conversations.

Commissioner Varilek stated an appreciation for the time and expertise Task Force Members put into this understanding and addressing this technical issue.

Task Force members and attendees shared and discussed how to support broadband moving forward with BEAD dollars being dispersed, in a way that supports and sustains trained Minnesota word forces, and supports affordability of broadband for Minnesotans. Recognition of specific considerations for Minnesota, like the geography, definition and complexity of access and affordability, and training in the work force. Consider reaching younger people to connect with training and workforce opportunities to promote a skilled Minnesota workforce. Call to consider too bringing together partners with expertise to understand data on issues at hand and ensure work is not impeded moving forward.

Recognition from Senator Putnam there is still a month left to the legislature process and there are shared priorities between Caucus and Broadband Task Force.

1. **Identify next steps**

Proposal to meet with Senator Putnam in the fall where Task Force can look to have recommendations of how to make broadband cheaper; how to promote adoption for long-term growth; and potential career/training pathways and programs.

The agenda from today’s meeting are posted on the Governor’s Task Force website: [Broadband Task Force / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (mn.gov)](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/task-force/)

The meeting was adjourned.