

November 12, 2020

Attn: Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

As a loyal customer of Alpine Communications for the past 25 years, both personal and professional, it is an honor to write a letter of support in their application for an Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant.

Their mission from the start has been "to build thriving communities in Clayton County through connection. They have grown with the changes in fiber optics, and have strived to communicate, identify and leverage broadband for businesses, healthcare, education, telecommuting, and quality of life."

I moved here as the shared superintendent of Garnavillo and Guttenberg Schools, and eventually led the two school districts to share and merge into what is now the Clayton Ridge Community Schools. The first thing Alpine did was to update our Iowa Communications Network classroom with fiber optics. Telecommunications in our school district has grown along with the advancement of Alpine.

Shortly after my retirement from Clayton Ridge Schools, I became Mayor of Guttenberg. Again, it was a pleasure to work with Alpine as they brought fiberoptic broadband to Guttenberg.

Although I am well into my retirement years, I remain active in thought and time regarding the survival and growth of rural America and NE Iowa. It is critically important that the internet be up to date in rural America as it is in urban areas. The coronavirus pandemic has caused a tremendous disruption to our lives, some changes that will probably always be with us.

Education of our young people particularly, is in turmoil for now and for some time into the future. Even when times are better, there will be more online learning and use of the internet. Broadband is critical in order to even the playing field for the delivery of education to all K-12 students. Face to face contact is important for much of our education but fiberoptic broadband has its place now and the future beyond this pandemic.

Many young people want to remain or return to Northeast Iowa to raise a family because of the quality of life, but they cannot do it without both parents working. Day care services are in short supply and now with the present pandemic more so. Broadband in rural areas will allow parents to work at home permanently in many cases, and it allows the flexibility to do so when necessary. This will be particularly helpful to farm families. The opening of schools across America this year will be a real test.

In summary please give strong consideration to this grant application from Alpine Communications. This company is service minded and works hard to help us grow as well as enjoy all the services of the internet. They have always responded to our personal needs as well as the community. Alpine is working to help our region grow and thrive through transforming the power of our rural broadband fiber optics network.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND COOPERATION,

Russell Loven, Supportive Customer, Retired School Superintendent, Retired Mayor