



February 19, 2025

Chair Baker, Lead Pinto and Members of the House Workforce, Labor and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of 300,000 union members who live and work in communities across Minnesota, we are writing to urge you to oppose weakening safety standards for broadband installation and ask you to vote No on House File 47.

The Broadband Worker Safety legislation passed by the Legislature in 2024 strengthened broadband worker and public safety by supporting the development of a skilled local workforce. A skilled, well-trained workforce will help to protect the integrity of existing public and utility infrastructure.

Reliable high-speed internet service is essential to the well-being of Minnesotans and access to education, health care, job opportunities, and other critical services. The State of Minnesota will soon receive and re-grant more than \$650 million in Federal funding to broadband providers, in addition to more than \$100 million in state funds, fueling well over \$1 billion in total investment in broadband infrastructure. We strongly support Minnesota's goal of providing universal high-speed internet connections to families and businesses in every corner of the state, but we need to do it right.

Many broadband installation workers are paid substandard wages, lack health and retirement benefits, and receive no formal training. Inexperience, lack of training and pressure to work quickly contribute to mistakes that jeopardize the safety of workers and members of the public along with the integrity of existing public utility infrastructure. Contractors that install broadband and other data lines are estimated to be responsible for hundreds of incidents of third-party damage to public and utility infrastructure annually.

Weakening safety standards for broadband installation will make Minnesota workers and communities less safe and risk public and utility infrastructure. Please vote No.

Sincerely,

Bernie Burnham
President

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Secretary-Treasurer



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