

Sen. Marklein: Calls on Governor to spend CARES Act funds on broadband expansion grant program

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Madison, WI – Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) sent a letter to Governor Tony Evers today to ask him to spend Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding on the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant Program.

“I have recently been meeting with most of the 34 school districts I represent to discuss re-opening schools. I have talked with parents and community leaders about their virtual learning challenges last spring,” Marklein said. **“It occurred to me that we should strongly consider dedicating funds from the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to the Broadband Expansion Grant Program. It would be an ideal way to use these funds to meet real, quantifiable needs with a proven program.”**

Marklein highlighted recent news from the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association (WSTA) that the State of Iowa has invested \$50 million of CARES Act funding into broadband expansion to occur this summer.

Marklein chaired the Legislative Council Study Committee on Rural Broadband in 2016, which identified a stable stream of funding, identified other funding options and fine-tuned criteria and processes to deploy Rural Broadband Expansion Grants where it is most needed.

He led these changes in the 2017-18 Budget and secured \$14 million for grants, including a stable funding source of \$2 million every biennium ongoing. In the 2019-20 State Budget, Marklein led the investment of \$48 million for Rural Broadband Expansion Grants. He also authored and passed several pieces of

legislation to support broadband expansion including 2015 Act 278, 2017 Act 342 and 2019 Act 128.

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