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September 08, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the Director of the Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library. Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library is the only two-county public library in Kansas. The Library serves a rural population of 26,577 residents in Pottawatomie and Wabaunsee counties and maintains libraries in Alma, Alta Vista, Eskridge, Harveyville, Olsburg, Onaga, St. Marys and Westmoreland. The Library currently manages around 100,000 volumes which are shared among the eight locations. PWRL's legal service area is composed of 1612 square miles, 792 square miles of which are located in Wabaunsee County.

It is my understanding that Cox Communications has submitted an application to the State's Capital Project Fund that could bring fiber to Eskridge, Harveyville, Lake Wabaunsee and a limited number of addresses in their immediate vicinity. PWRL manages a Branch Library in Eskridge at 115 S. Main Street. We also manage a Mini Library in Harveyville at 128 W. Oak Street. Both these locations are located central in the downtown business area of these very small communities. We are absolutely desperate to get quality high speed internet service at these locations.

Two years ago the Library moved from accounts with Century link for Internet and Telephone service because at that time they could not sell us any more than 10 MB of Internet Speed. That is simply not enough to support modern Library Services, plus offer additional access to the public who depend on the library for this service. We moved our accounts to Mercury Broadband who promised 100 MB of speed at Eskridge and 30 MB at Harveyville.

We are very disappointed with the service that we are able to get through Mercury Broadband. It took a year of constant calls and tech onsite visits to get anything approaching a sufficient connection speed at Eskridge and Harveyville. The Speed Test I ran today at our Eskridge Location, see attached, shows a download speed of 1.26 MB and an upload speed of 5.80 MB. We are charged for 30 MB x 6 MB, but it typical for the connection speed to fluctuate widely at both locations. This situation makes doing regular library business a challenge on most days.

A company that can provide high speed internet service that is stable and reliable is desperately needed in this area. With it residents could gain the access they need to receive telemedicine services, to take advantage of distant learning, and to benefit from the services that a truly reliable high-speed Internet connection can provide.

The Library offers citizens in Wabaunsee County access to many digital resources. They may use the Library Card issued at our Alma, Eskridge, Alta Vista or Harveyville locations to access a wealth of information through the use of these online databases and services. Patrons can set up their own account within PWRL's Online Library Catalog. From there they are free to place requests for both local materials and items borrowed through the Statewide Interlibrary Loan System. Patrons may also access digital audiobooks and ebooks using their PWRL Library Card and their SunflowerLibrary, Hoopla, and Flipster Accounts.

Patrons may also access additional digital audiobooks and e-books from the Kansas State Library statewide collection using a Kansas Library Card issued at their local Library. They can also access a multitude of other digital resources and online learning tools using this same Kansas Library Card. To do any of these things though, patrons must first have a reliable high speed internet connection. The options for this in Wabaunsee County are not at all good.

As Director for the Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library, I have seen the negative impact that the lack of reliable high-speed Internet has on a community, especially during the pandemic. From a distance learning perspective, it has specifically impacted those students that were forced into a remote learning environment. Unreliable, slow Internet kept them from effectively complete their work from home and definitely slowed the pace of learning. High-speed Internet has become a necessity in today's learning situation.

Please accept this letter as full support to bring high speed Internet to Wabaunsee County. Without this support, this area will continue to struggle with the connectivity that is so vital to survive in today's Internet dependent environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Judith Cremer".

Judith Cremer, Director  
Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library