



March 26, 2021

The Honorable Jennifer Schultz  
Chair  
House Human Services Finance and  
Policy Committee

The Honorable Kristin Bahner  
Vice Chair  
House Human Services Finance and  
Policy Committee

The Honorable Tony Albright  
Ranking Member  
House Human Services Finance and  
Policy Committee

### **Internet Association Supports Giving All Minnesotans Access To Local Websites Through HF35**

Dear Chair Schultz, Vice Chair Bahner, and Ranking Member Albright:

Internet Association (IA) represents the world's leading internet companies and supports policies that promote and enable internet innovation, including commercial cloud solutions. Our member companies are global leaders in the drive to develop lower cost, more secure, innovative, and most importantly, accessible, digital government services, with a focus on both the civil servants delivering those services and the residents receiving them.

On behalf of our members, I thank you for your consideration of [House File 35](#) (HF35), which will provide every Minnesotan the opportunity to obtain crucial government services, such as unemployment assistance, rental assistance, and help for other pandemic-era concerns, but also a variety of other important services, such as a library card, campground reservations, or registration of a new business. By providing the funding necessary to update and modernize local government websites, the state will continue to stake its position as a national leader in this space.<sup>1</sup>

If we are to completely close the digital divide, our friends, family members, and neighbors that are reliant on services being compliant with the federal and state based accessibility statutes<sup>2</sup> must be able to have confidence that every government entity they deal with will be able to support them when they are in need. In order to achieve this objective, additional clarity around whether the grant recipients will be able to benefit from the work being performed by the [Minnesota IT Services](#) (MNIT) [Office of Accessibility](#) through their 5-year Strategic Plan<sup>3</sup> would be beneficial. Ensuring access to the training, resources, testing, and even expertise of the staff at MNIT continues beyond the project being funded by the grant will help solidify progress and maintain momentum.

Additionally, while the criteria used to evaluate grant applications is understandably being left to the team at the Minnesota Council on Disability that will be overseeing these grants, it would be beneficial to

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<sup>1</sup> See GSA Government-wide IT Accessibility Program, State Policy, <https://www.section508.gov/manage/laws-and-policies/state>, (last accessed March 17, 2021)

<sup>2</sup> See Minnesota IT Services, Statutory Basis for Accessibility, <https://mn.gov/mnit/government/policies/accessibility/stat-basis.jsp>, (last accessed March 17, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> See MNIT Office of Accessibility Strategic Plan, [https://mn.gov/mnit/assets/accessibility-5-year-strategic-plan\\_tcm38-386157.pdf](https://mn.gov/mnit/assets/accessibility-5-year-strategic-plan_tcm38-386157.pdf) (November 2018)



ensure a focus on the use of public cloud-based services is emphasised. Focusing on a cloud-based frontend and backend infrastructure for website modernization programs will help the recipients take over their websites after the grants are expended in such a way that they have a better chance of being self-reliant for future updates and maintenance. A public cloud-forward set of evaluation criteria will also ensure grant recipients have access to similar automated tools and tests that the state itself uses to create baselines.<sup>4</sup>

Minnesota has long set the model for expanding access, especially as it relates to delivering modern, digital, and accessible government services, and this bill is yet another step forward. With your support and the additional clarity around the incentives to be promoted through this bill, the state will continue to set the path forward for others.

We appreciate your time in considering our feedback and encourage you to support HF35. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or would like to discuss the benefits of this bill in further detail. Thank you.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Colleen Daley'.

Colleen Daley  
Director, State Government Affairs, Midwest

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Omid Ghaffari-Tabrizi'.

Omid Ghaffari-Tabrizi  
Director, Cloud Policy

Cc: The Honorable Liz Boldon  
The Honorable John Burkel  
The Honorable Peter Fischer  
The Honorable Luke Frederick  
The Honorable Jessica Hanson  
The Honorable Debra Kiel  
The Honorable Tina Liebling  
The Honorable Kelly Moller  
The Honorable Mohamud Noor  
The Honorable Paul Novotny  
The Honorable Nels Pierson  
The Honorable Dave Pinto  
The Honorable Jordan Rasmusson  
The Honorable Kristin Robbins  
The Honorable Steve Sandell  
The Honorable Joe Schomacker  
The Honorable Rena Moran

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, page 26.