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November 26, 2024

Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
600 E Main St #300
Richmond, VA 23219

DHCD Staff,

EMPOWER BROADBAND submits this Letter of Intent providing notice to DHCD of its participation in Virginia's BEAD program.

EMPOWER Broadband is the wholly owned subsidiary of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative (MEC), a member-owned utility that has proudly and successfully served Southside Virginia for over 85 years. Collectively, EMPOWER Broadband and Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative have extensive experience in managing projects similar in scope to the continued endeavor to finalize universal coverage of high-speed broadband across their service area in Southside Virginia. MEC, EMPOWER's parent company, operates and manages \$271 Million in utility plant that provides services to over 34,000 homes and businesses through 4,500 miles of electric line.

MEC and EMPOWER have successfully managed broadband projects awarded through:

- Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Connect America Fund (CAF)
- FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)
- FCC Enhanced Alternative Connect America Cost Model funding (E-ACAM)
- USDA RUS ReConnect Loan
- USDA RUS ReConnect Grant
- CARES funding
- Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission Last Mile Grants
- DHCD Line Extension Customer Assistance Program (LECAP)
- And multiple Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) projects.

These projects include the construction and operation of significant existing network capabilities in the Virginia counties of Brunswick, Charlotte, Halifax, Greensville, Mecklenburg, Pittsylvania and the City of Emporia.

Today, MEC and its subsidiary, EMPOWER Broadband, have built, deployed, and manage over 2000 miles of fiber facilities. EMPOWER is committed to providing high-speed internet and voice services to rural community residents, businesses, and community anchor institutions across Southside Virginia by utilizing its extensive experience in design, installation, and maintenance of electric and broadband infrastructure. Currently, EMPOWER services over 2,100 voice access lines, over 500 DSL internet subscribers, and over 6,500 fiber internet subscribers, a number that grows each day.

Additionally, MEC and EMPOWER have partnered with Dominion Energy and Mid-Atlantic Broadband through an affiliation that furthers the deployment of its fiber network deeper into more unserved and underserved areas, and accordingly have executed agreements and MOU's providing MEC and EMPOWER access to these entities' network elements.

EMPOWER serves subscribers in Brunswick Co., Charlotte Co., Halifax Co., Greensville Co., Mecklenburg Co., Pittsylvania Co., the City of Emporia, Northampton Co. (NC), Vance Co. (NC), and Warren Co. (NC). Thanks to its partners along the way — the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, the Department of Housing and Community Development, Southside Planning District Commission and the aforementioned counties who have made this rural expansion a reality — EMPOWER continues to experience steady growth.

Attached to this Letter of Intent is Exhibit A, a list of counties and cities that EMPOWER may make application to provide broadband access through the BEAD program.

In closing, EMPOWER and MEC appreciate DHCD's commitment to complete universal coverage to Southside Virginia and the remainder of Virginia's rural communities.

Respectfully,



David H. Lipscomb

Vice President of Member and Energy Services
Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative

Vice President of Marketing and Communications
EMPOWER Broadband, Inc.