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The Honorable Mia Costello
Alaska State Capitol
120 4th Street, Room 119
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: Senate Bill 234 – Broadband, Office, Grants, Parity

Dear Senator Costello:

We appreciate your leadership in sponsoring Senate Bill 234 “Broadband: Office, Grants, Parity” based on the hard work of Governor Dunleavy’s Broadband Task Force this past summer. The task force spent hundreds of hours of hearing from qualified, engaged Alaskans representing a broad range of stakeholders and communities. We appreciate your efforts to amplify those voices and carrying this important work forward.

GCI has been delivering connectivity to Alaskans for more than 40 years and we are well-versed in the challenges of providing broadband service to rural communities and in Arctic environments. To expand Alaska’s broadband infrastructure and close the digital divide, we concur with the framework of this legislation: standing up an Office of Broadband Deployment in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Regional Development; targeting unserved and underserved communities; prioritizing local workforce development; maximizing federal partnerships by establishing a federal grant-matching fund, streamlining state permitting; and establishing a broadband parity adjustment fund.

This is a once in a generation opportunity, it cannot be overstated how important it is that we follow the federal guidelines set forth in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to maximize Alaska’s eligibility for Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment funds. SB 234 will help ensure this is an achievable goal.

Again, thank you for your initiative on this legislation to help bring reliable, high-speed, affordable broadband to every Alaskan.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Windt Pearson
Senior Vice President, Law and Corporate Advocacy, and General Counsel