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February 11, 2015

Senator Baldwin,

The Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance enthusiastically supports and endorses your proposed legislation "Enhancing Education Through Technology Act of 2015.

Rural school districts throughout Wisconsin are facing significant and unique challenges brought on by declining enrollments, sparsity, high transportation costs, lack of economies of scale and diminishing resources. The end result is a dramatic erosion of educational opportunities for our rural youth. The greatest hope to reverse this trend is through the effective use and application of technology.

The expansion of access to high speed broadband is the critical first step in allowing rural districts to expand opportunities for their youth. However, it is imperative that these rural districts also have the infrastructure in place and a technology support system available in order to take full advantage of the potential that technology can offer. In addition, it is absolutely necessary that intense professional learning opportunities are made available to teachers, principals and support staff in order to truly transform education by effectively utilizing digital tools to provide personalized learning experiences for all students.

The unfortunate reality is that rural districts across Wisconsin simply do not have the resources to make this happen. This legislation would provide these targeted resources. Our hope is to close the opportunity gap for our rural youth and help them to become college and career ready when they graduate from our high schools. We applaud you for introducing legislation that will help us to reach that goal.

Sincerely,

Jerry Fiene
Executive Director
Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance