

Good morning Chair Riley, members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Alex McHaddad, Executive Director of the Blue Mountain Translator District serving Union & Baker Counties, & I am here to testify on SB 393 & 394. It is humbling to testify at the first hearing on translator district legislation since 1997.

Broadcast translators transmit TV or radio signals originating in another location. The legislature created TV translator districts in 1975, BMTD was created in 1978, & we have been the only one in Oregon since the closure of Maupin Translator District in 2008.

Oregon translator districts have difficulty operating due to a volatile revenue system & restrictive administrative procedures. BMTD is funded by voluntary service charge payments that are placed on property taxes if property owners do not reply to our service charge liability notice with a payment or exemption request. We entirely surround but do not include ten cities, where signal users can only be billed following a physical inspection to locate an antenna. This results in unpredictable revenue & we can only afford one .5 FTE employee, thus preventing regular inspections of cities. We surveyed these communities last fall, however, and found over 320 unregistered antennas in Baker & Union County cities. Additionally, preventing cities from joining translator districts results in a regular shortage of eligible board members.

SB 393 and SB 394 put BMTD on the path to correcting our administrative problems and growing revenue, as well as improving our community. SB 393 permits voters in cities to consider annexation, and will allow all service charge payers to serve on our board regardless of these election results. The -1 Amendment would also exempt state properties from paying the service charge, and would affect 3 properties in the region for which the state pays in lieu of tax.

SB 394 allows BMTD to transmit signals with the next generation of digital broadcast standards (a.k.a. ATSC 3.0), & broadcast video on demand content when using ATSC 3.0. We would be permitted to own or lease our own channel or subchannel providing hyper-local news & information that can be streamed & used as a platform to generate advertising revenue & inform viewers of the need to pay a service charge. Most importantly, we would be able to transmit local emergency alerts on our signals. The bill also abolishes a provision that permits commercial content replacement solely on a pro bono basis. Stations have never permitted this, some stations oppose making it a revenue source for the District, & the feature is ultimately cost-prohibitive.

Introduced provisions in these two bills have a wide swath of support in our community, including from Union & Baker Counties, several cities & rural fire protection districts, & the Union County Farm Bureau. We hope that you will join them in supporting these bills. I am excited to answer your questions about this legislation. Thank you.

