



March 9, 2021

House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity  
900 Court Se. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Support for HB 3256 -1 and -2 Amendments**

Chair Lively and Members of the committee,

The League of Oregon Cities supports HB 3256 with the -1 and -2 amendments. Connectivity is crucial to modern life. It is being relied on for how people do business, learn, and receive important services like healthcare and emergency services. As technology has evolved, the digital divide has continued to grow. Many times, when the digital divide is referenced, the topic of conversation is centered around access issues in terms of infrastructure. However, affordability remains one of the main roadblocks to access. That is why the -1 and -2 amendments are so important.

The -1 amendment would require the Oregon Public Utilities Commission in consultation with the Broadband Office and the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council to open up an investigation into the Oregon Telephone Assistance Program which provides low-income broadband and telephone subsidies. This investigation would explore ways in which to expand the OTAP program and identify any other barriers to broadband affordability.

The -2 amendment creates the Connecting Oregon Libraries Fund, which will be similar to the Connecting Oregon Schools Fund that was created in 2018. This fund will allow Oregon libraries to be more competitive for federal funds like the federal E-rate program. Libraries play a key role in connectivity and serve as a free access point to those who do not have adequate service and/or devices to surf the internet. Additional investments in libraries will help all Oregonians, particularly those in rural areas.

HB 3256 with the -1 and -2 amendments is good policy and will help close the digital divide. The League of Oregon Cities urges the committee to support HB 3256 with the -1 and -2 amendments.

Respectfully,

Jenna Jones  
League of Oregon Cities  
[jjones@orcities.org](mailto:jjones@orcities.org)