



**TESTIMONY OF TODD WAY
CEO, DOUGLAS FAST NET
HB 2654
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC RECOVERY
AND PROSPERITY**

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Kropf and Cate and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Todd Way, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Douglas Fast Net. I am here to testify in support of HB 2654, to help break down barriers to broadband deployment in rural and frontier Oregon. I am here on behalf of Douglas Fast Net and Douglas Electric Cooperative. We want to thank Reps. Marsh and David Brock Smith for their leadership with this bill and appreciate Rep. Cate and Levy for cosponsoring HB 2654.

Douglas Fast Net was founded in 2001 when Douglas Electric Cooperative's board and management realized their members did not have access to the same level of service as those in urban areas. At the time, the local phone company was having issues providing reliable dial tone to the community and had no plans to deploy broadband within Douglas County. It became apparent to Douglas Electric that access to affordable and reliable broadband was an economic development issue as well as a quality-of-life issue.

While Douglas Electric and DFN have had success in bringing broadband to much of Douglas County, today large parts of rural Oregon still lack access to gigabit-capable broadband. The passage of HB2654 will give service providers like DFN, Ziplify, Charter, and Beacon Broadband another tool to use when extending broadband to rural customers.

For all service providers, obtaining easements from landowners is one of the most difficult tasks we face. Until permits and easements have been secured, a project can't move forward. We often experience extensive delays while trying to obtain easements to use existing poles. For DFN, entire jobs have had to be redesigned because we were unable to secure an easement from a single landowner. More than once, we have had to cancel the fiber extension and inform the customer we could not serve them, leaving them with subpar DSL or satellite as their only options.

The terrain in rural Oregon can be difficult - between the winding roads, hillsides, railroads, rivers and creeks, there are few spots that utilities can be placed. Using the existing pole lines is sometimes the only option to extend our fiber. However, just because a pole line is near the edge of the road, it may not mean that it is on the public right of way. We have faced situations where the landowner will not let us use a pole line that is just inside of their fence line, leaving us with no choice but to cancel the project.



Private roads and shared driveways may not include utility easements, requiring us to secure an easement for each parcel that our fiber crosses. If a landowner is unwilling to let us cross their property, all the homes beyond that parcel may not be able to be served. It is likely those homes may never be served by fiber optic broadband service.

Sometimes we are given verbal permission by the landowner to attach to the existing poles, but they will not sign an easement that will further encumber the property title. Unfortunately, verbal permission isn't enough to allow us to extend our fiber. Other times, we are unable to get in contact with the property owner to even discuss an easement, leaving us with no option but to reroute or cancel the job.

These everyday scenarios are not unique to DFN, anyone attempting to deploy broadband in rural areas has had similar experiences. HB 2654 is necessary to ensure that all Oregonians have access to affordable, reliable broadband.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Todd Way, CEO
Douglas Fast Net