



April 16, 2021

Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Se. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 2507

Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Boquist, and members of the committee,

The League of Oregon Cities supports HB 2507. Connectivity is crucial to modern life. It is being relied on more 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. Historically, affordability has been a barrier to access for traditional telephone service and broadband services and has contributed to the digital divide. The Oregon Telephone Assistance Program is a subsidizes the cost of telephone and broadband access for those who struggle to afford it. OTAP is a vital service used by thousands of low-income Oregonians in small and large communities around the state.

Hb 2507 does two things – extends the sunset of the program until 2030 and decouples the program from its federal counterpart. During the pandemic, we have seen the Joint Legislative Emergency Board make investments in OTAP which shows the need is still great at the state level. Furthermore, the federal program is beginning to phase out access to traditional phone services from their program. Though many have switched to broadband services there is still a sector of vulnerable Oregonians that are reliant of the need for traditional phone/landline services in order to access healthcare, emergency services, businesses, education or even loved ones. Decoupling the state program from the federal program will make it so those vulnerable Oregonians do not risk losing their access to communication.

The Legislature has the opportunity to ensure that investments in telephone and broadband services for low-income Oregonians is not jeopardized by decreased funding at the federal level. The League of Oregon Cities urges the committee to support HB 2507.

Respectfully,

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