



Board of Commissioners

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20 April 2021

Co-Chairs Senator Johnson, Senator Hayward and Representative Rayfield  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

Re: State Broadband Office Funding

Dear Co-Chairs,

We are working a diverse Oregon coalition to support the broadband budget items in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) and to provide additional targeted funds, described below.

We belong to the four-county Broadband Action Team representing stakeholders in Lincoln, Linn, Benton and Lane Counties, Jefferson County Broadband Action Team, Columbia Pacific Economic Development District, Lake County, the City of Madras, Oregon Child Care Resource & Referral Directors' Coalition and the Linn, Benton, Lincoln Educational Service District.

Our members have been working tirelessly over the past year to help rural jurisdictions overcome broadband challenges posed by COVID-19 and wildfires, and to set plans in motion to ensure rural communities are not left behind as Oregon begins to build back better.

First, we ask for your support and allocation of the \$100 million in general obligation bonds for broadband implementation.

We also ask that you consider dedicating funds for the following:

**1. Planning and Technical Assistance Grants: \$10M**

Prior to COVID-19 and the wildfires, jurisdictions struggled with capacity to engage in critical planning and community engagement processes. Post-emergencies, our capacity shortage is acute. This funding would allow rural jurisdictions and coalitions (including Broadband Action Teams) to hire consultants to guide the creation of local and regional broadband strategies, resource development, community engagement and planning for shovel-ready projects.

**2. Digital Inclusion Grants: \$10M**

COVID-19 has demonstrated how differently the digital divide has affected different members of our communities—from seniors trying to access telehealth, to non-native English speakers trying to access language-responsive content, low-to-moderate income and rural children struggling to access homework and more. Funding in this area would support the five elements of digital inclusion (as defined by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance): 1-affordable, robust broadband internet service; 2-internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user; 3-access to digital literacy training; 4-quality technical support; 5-applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

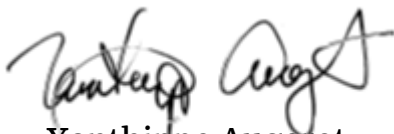
**3. Library Modernization Grants: \$10M**

Libraries are community hubs for digital access and inclusion—providing free computer access, digital literacy training, workforce training, coding camps and other STEM activities. This fund would support the modernization of libraries across the state with higher broadband speeds, training, and better devices.

**4. Broadband Projects Grants: \$70M**

This fund would support shovel-ready projects that would deliver broadband to homes and businesses in Oregon. Various technologies, such as fiber to the home, satellite, wi-fi, etc. would be supported.

Thank you for your consideration,



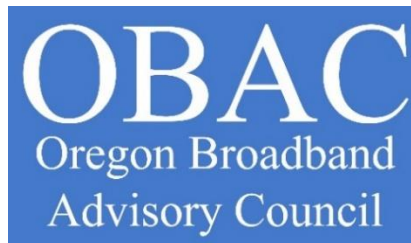
Xanthippe Augerot  
Chair



Nancy Wyse  
Vice Chair



Pat Malone  
Commissioner



April 9, 2021

Joseph Franell  
Chair – Oregon Broadband Advisory Council  
President – Blue Mountain Networks and Eastern Oregon Telecom  
PO Box 848  
2180 SE Kelli Blvd  
Hermiston, OR 97838

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

I am writing to you to convey my support for the letter from broadband stakeholders across the state that recommends approval of and a framework for the use of the \$100 million in the Governor's budget for broadband.

The letter they have submitted is the result of numerous discussions with individuals and groups from all walks of life, leaders in economic development, educators, local elected officials, and more. These are the people on the ground who are engaged in identifying and solving real problems in the areas most in need of better connectivity.

Oregon's Broadband Advisory Council has learned over the past decade plus of research, that successful broadband solutions start with "broadband champions". These folks are just that and their proposed framework will ensure meaningful impacts for Oregon. I have personally been engaged with the authors and can tell you that they are informed and that their letter is spot on.

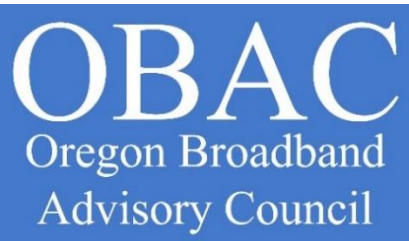
I strongly encourage you to include the \$100 million broadband budget in the State budget and leverage the proposed framework this group has presented. If you do, I am confident that the return on that investment will be remarkable.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph Franell", written in a cursive style.

Joseph Franell



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