



February 2, 2022

House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity

RE: HB 4092-2 Connecting Oregon for the 21st Century- Broadband Governance, Availability and Equity.

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee:

The Telehealth Alliance of Oregon (TAO) and the Oregon Rural Health Association (ORHA) urge your support for HB 4092-2, Connecting Oregon for the 21st Century.

Successful telehealth programs require access to broadband technology. Without ubiquitous access to broadband, there is no ubiquitous access to healthcare through telehealth. Those most affected are Oregonians who live in rural areas, the elderly, and people of color. There are many people who do not have access to telecommunications for telehealth due to lack of infrastructure in hard to serve areas, lack of digital literacy, and/ or lack of affordability. HB 4092-2 helps address these issues to ensure equality of access for all Oregonians.

HB 4092-2 offers three legislative changes that would enhance the ability for health care providers to offer services to the people of Oregon in a more accessible and equitable manner:

1. The reconfiguration of the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council includes a seat for a telehealth representative. A telehealth representative will not only bring health care knowledge to the Council, but be able to identify those areas where people are not receiving care because of the lack of or inadequate broadband. The telehealth community has been participating in statewide broadband organizations from the beginning and have worked tirelessly to improve Oregon's broadband foot print.
2. Telehealth has a lot to contribute to the strategic framing and mapping of broadband in Oregon. TAO and the Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) have worked together for many years to define the telehealth services map for Oregon. It is an on-going and

expensive task; however, being able to contribute to a strategic broadband framework is exciting and will be productive for the overall growth of broadband in the State.

3. TAO and ORHA understand the digital divide will not be resolved with just the provision of adequate broadband. Resolving issues of affordability and digital literacy are also key to eliminating the divide. Even with federal assistance programs, many will not be able to afford broadband services or the equipment. Nor will all have the knowledge needed to use telehealth for health care. The study to optimize the Oregon Telecommunication Assistance Program will provide the opportunity to consider these challenges and find solutions to resolve them.

TAO and ORHA respectfully request your support for HB 4092 and the -2 amendments

Sincerely,

Catherine Britain
Exec. Dir., TAO

Robert Duehmig
ORHA