

February 2, 2022

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

RE: Support for HB 4092

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee,

The City of Veneta supports HB 4092. We have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic that connectivity is crucial to modern life. Broadband access—affordable broadband access—is the key to connectivity. Oregon is set to receive hundreds of thousands of dollars related to broadband. The state will need to spend that money in ways that are effective in mitigating barriers to broadband access including through infrastructure, planning, mapping, and affordability.

Veneta needs a strong, action-oriented state broadband partner to deliver on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change rural Oregon's economic paradigm. HB 4092 will help the state address barriers to broadband by strengthening the state broadband office's governance structure, setting a strategic framework to guide the broadband office, allowing the broadband office to access more mapping data to guide their decisions, and creating paths for more digital equity.

An Action-Oriented Oregon Broadband Office

Veneta needs to leverage state broadband dollars to achieve its vision to build-out broadband infrastructure in a manner to managing streets: A publicly owned pathway open to all traffic. Currently, the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council is not able to provide oversight to the Oregon Broadband Office. HB 4092 gives the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council that authority. The bill also creates a road map or framework to guide the broadband office's investments. The Oregon Broadband Office will be in charge of record level broadband funding and there should be a governance structure and framework that has accountability measures. A robust state-agency partner is what Veneta needs to make its vision a reality.

Affordability for All

Veneta's broadband deployment goal is two-fold: Equal access and affordable. Section 7 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. Veneta supports using these funds to help Veneta citizens access the information highway that gives access to empowerment.

Respectfully,



Matt Michel
City Administrator