



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 4092
SUBMITTED BY TREVOR BELTZ, MANAGER, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
ON BEHALF OF TILLAMOOK COUNTY CREAMERY ASSOCIATION
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND PROSPERITY
February 2, 2022

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee,

Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA) is a 113-year-old farmer-owned, farmer-led cooperative, which is known for the quality of the products we produce and for our commitment to working collaboratively with a diverse set of stakeholders to solve complex problems. For generations, our farmers have worked to conserve air, land, and water as their livelihoods depend on it. We're dedicated to continually improving agricultural practices, leveraging everything from scientific and technological breakthroughs to our farmers intergenerational knowledge about the land. Digital equity is one such problem our co-op has identified as a priority.

There are about 80 farm owners in the cooperative, each with different access to the internet. Access to broadband, or faster broadband, makes it possible to implement technological solutions which make their jobs easier. There are device applications in herd management – tags or collars on each cow that provide live data on nutrition, health analytics and early disease detection; applications in precision feeding, which connect to herd management devices to calibrate and distribute optimal feed, decreasing food waste and cost; and applications in milk tank reporting, allowing constant monitoring of temperature and pH balance. These solutions allow producers to better meet herd needs. Relaxed cows lead to higher quality milk, and for processors like TCCA, results in a better end product.

TCCA supports HB 4092 with the -2 amendments. We appreciate Representative Marsh's foresight and planning to support the Oregon Broadband Office's (OBO) management of the historic levels of federal broadband funds. The bill provides the framework for governance and criteria that will guide OBO strategic deployment of the funds. Specifically, TCCA supports the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council (OBAC) positions that are dedicated to historically disadvantaged communities, including



Oregonians who are farmworkers, migrant workers, those living in rural parts of the state, a rural business member and a rural service provider.

TCCA also supports the strategic direction to develop cost-effective broadband in remote and high-cost areas. In rural part of the state, lower population density make new investment uneconomic for traditional providers. Federal and state investments have the potential to reduce these barriers for new and alternative providers to enter those markets and will increase digital equity for rural Oregonians.

There are many co-benefits to investments in digital equity efforts in rural areas. A 2019 USDA study found potential economic benefit of expanding digital technologies in agriculture at \$47-\$65 billion annually in additional gross benefit to the US economy, \$7.8-\$10.5 billion directly related to livestock.¹ The Oregon Broadband Advisory Council's Broadband in 2020 Oregon Report stated:

"Investments in broadband for agricultural business purposes will enhance other aspects of rural life. From rural healthcare options, to first response communications, to telework opportunities, to education. Of particular note, is the issue of first response. Rural agriculture producer are also typically the first responders as they compose the bulk of rural fire protection districts and are the knowledgeable landowners. Communications networks are critical for emergency response and public safety."²

Thank you for your consideration of HB 4092 and your attention to this important issue.

¹ USDA, *A Case for Rural Broadband* (2019). <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/case-for-rural-broadband.pdf>

² <https://www.oregon4biz.com/Broadband-Office/OBAC/Reports/BroadbandRpt2020.pdf>