



House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity

Comments of the Oregon Cable Telecommunications Association and the Oregon Telecommunications Association

February 2, 2022

HB 4092

The Oregon Cable Telecommunications Association (OCTA) and the Oregon Telecommunications Association (OTA) support HB 4092 and the -2 amendment. The OCTA and OTA provide access to broadband and other telecommunications services to the majority of all Oregonians. If signed into law, HB 4092 will provide needed direction to the Oregon Broadband Office (OBO) and implement other useful changes related to Oregon's state broadband statutes and plans.

While OCTA and OTA support all sections of the bill, these comments and our remarks will focus on section 1, section 2 and section 7.

Section 1 and 2

Oregon Broadband Advisory Council

These sections bring much needed changes to the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council (OBAC). Appropriate representation and term limits for OBAC members will help ensure public confidence in the OBO processes that determine the allocation of grants and loans.

By advising the OBO on best practices and establishing grant review processes, the legislature will further the goals of advancing the deployment and maintenance of broadband capable networks in unserved and underserved areas of the state. As representatives of entities offering broadband access to most Oregonians, OCTA and OTA cannot overemphasize the importance of these two sections.

Additionally, Section 1 ensures that rural service providers, rural businesses and other disadvantaged communities are adequately represented on OBAC.

Section 7

Study of Oregon Telephone Assistance Program

The Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP) is designed to assist qualifying Oregonians pay their monthly telecommunications bill, either for voice service or broadband service. OTAP has been in existence for many years and is expertly managed by Staff at the Oregon Public Utility Commission.

If state programs such as OTAP exist and are meant to help Oregonians, then it makes sense to explore how best to ensure that assistance happens, regardless of who is providing the service. HB 4092 directs an investigation into the program in order to determine how best to move forward.

Both associations regard the mapping language in section 4 as targeted at only those entities choosing to apply for or challenge a broadband grant or loan. It is the intent of the bill's sponsors to limit the information gathering to these specific instances and not further.

In closing, both OCTA and OTA want to stress that we feel all funding sources for broadband related grants and loans in Oregon should be directed to the OBO. The legislature created the broadband fund and specifically noted in statute that all potential projects should address unserved and underserved areas. Both organizations fully believe that the OBO needs rules reflecting that fact and that sources of funds adhere to the language and spirit of the enabling legislation.

OCTA and OTA believe HB 4092 is a good bill and should pass in it's entirety. Both organizations urge the Committee to take speedy and positive action on HB 4092 and the -2 amendment.