



LINK
OREGON

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Co-Chairs Senator Rachel Armitage and Representative Nancy Nathanson
Joint Legislative Committee on Information Management and Technology
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Written testimony in support of H.B. 4155

Dear Senator Armitage and Representative Nathanson,

I am writing on behalf of Link Oregon in support of H.B. 4155 that would establish the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCoE) and position the reconstituted Oregon Cybersecurity Advisory Council (OCAC) as the governing body for the OCCoE.

H.B. 4155 intends to establish the OCCoE as an independent, non-profit public corporation with responsibility for oversight, coordination, funding, education, and training to raise awareness of the growing prevalence, impact, and evolution of cybersecurity threats. Oregon would benefit from enhanced workforce development and be positioned to leverage emerging cybersecurity-related technologies and services to protect the public, non-profit, and private sectors. Importantly, this bill will position the state better to leverage upcoming targeted federal investments in this societally critical area.

I serve as the executive director of Link Oregon, the federally tax-exempt (501(c)(3)), Oregon non-profit organization established by Oregon's four largest research universities (OHSU, Oregon State University, Portland State University, and the University of Oregon) and the Enterprise Information Services unit within the State of Oregon. Our mission is to operate a statewide, facilities-based, middle-mile network serving the public and non-profit sectors in Oregon. As such, cybersecurity is a core concern for our members that comprise K-12 schools and school districts, higher education, public health organizations, Tribal facilities, and government offices in both urban and rural settings. From a broad information systems perspective, many modes of cybersecurity defense are integrally tied to the network infrastructure.

Undoubtedly, ransomware and other cyberattacks are threatening critical infrastructure, the economy, and public health and safety. Local and regional governments, education service districts, school districts, and public libraries have all recognized these vulnerabilities. Many smaller entities require immediate attention to address these threats. Sophisticated ransomware attacks can be costly and time-consuming to mitigate. Local governments, small school districts, and special districts across Oregon are asking for more help to protect themselves against cybersecurity attacks and often do not know where to seek help or which questions are the most important to ask.

The hub for cybersecurity expertise, training, and project execution that the OCCoE will provide will be a welcome addition to Oregon's technology landscape. Oregon has been lagging other states in keeping current with critical technologies and meeting the challenges that come with IT modernization. Oregon requires a high degree of safety and assuredness when it comes to protecting the digital systems that are used to deliver education, healthcare, community information sharing, disaster alerts, and related services.

With H.B. 4155's focus on establishing mechanisms to boost public awareness, identify vulnerabilities, offer resources and assistance, and undertake preventative measures to increase online safety and security, a viable Center of Excellence will be a critical step for protecting Oregon communities and public institutions from the kinds of elusive cyberthreats that are evolving quickly and often prove difficult to manage.

In addition to meeting the need to raise awareness of these threats through training and other public campaigns, the OCCoE will help respond to the shortage of qualified cybersecurity professionals and create new job opportunities for Oregonians either just starting their careers or those seeking to change careers from industries that may be retooling or digitizing.

Having a fully funded, independent, and responsive OCCoE will mean greater flexibility and support for these needed training programs. Sustainable funding will successfully increase the availability of qualified local cybersecurity professionals to address our states burgeoning cybersecurity challenges. The public, non-profit, and private sectors must work together for this effort to be successful. The passage of H.B. 4155 will ensure that the mechanisms will be in place to encourage that collaboration.

Link Oregon strongly endorses H.B. 4155 as introduced. In addition, we commit to working closely with the OCCoE, once established, and the OCAC to identify areas of programmatic collaboration and opportunities for coordinating network and cybersecurity services. This collaboration is natural for us as the OCCoE's three founding higher education members are also founding members of Link Oregon.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this input and for your continuing leadership to advance the level of cybersecurity preparedness for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Steven Corbató
Executive Director