

HB 3249 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

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Meeting Dates: 3/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Repeals sunset of Broadband Fund and related program. Expands access to broadband service infrastructure grants or loans from Broadband Fund for underserved and unserved areas. Amends definition "underserved area" and "unserved area" and reduces preferences when making grants to focus on unserved and underserved areas.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

During the first special session of 2020, the Legislative Assembly created the Oregon Broadband Fund in recognition of the need to address the digital divide between rural and urban areas, as well as in historically underserved and unserved areas in Oregon. During the pandemic, Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which included funding to address broadband access. The federal funds are intended to target unserved, underserved, and tribal communities and improve digital equity in historically marginalized communities across the state.

House Bill 3249 updates the definition of unserved and underserved for use with the broadband fund to reflect faster internet standards. The measure reduces preferences when making grants to focus on unserved and underserved areas.