

HB 3201 -1, -2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

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Meeting Dates: 2/21, 3/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires Oregon Business Development Department to provide financial assistance to support broadband access, affordability, and adoption. Gives preference to proposed projects that serve unserved areas or underserved areas. Makes Broadband Fund permanent. Requires Oregon Broadband Advisory Council to include continuing need for temporary program for providing grants or loans in biennial report. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 adds judicial review for final orders under a program to section 1(4)(a).

-2 adds a process for challenging an application to section 1(3)(a) as sub part (E).

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 3201 aligns Oregon statute with federal rules, guidance, and best practices related to federal broadband funds by eliminating restrictions on the Broadband Fund. The measure aligns Broadband Fund speed requirements with current technology needs and requirements of funding sources, maintains a preference for unserved and underserved areas in Oregon, and provides a process for public notice and an opportunity for comment on applications.