

HB 3201 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Rep. Marsh

House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Action Date: 03/16/23

Action: Do pass with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 6-5-0-0

Yeas: 6 - Bynum, Lively, Nguyen D, Pham H, Ruiz, Walters

Nays: 5 - Diehl, Elmer, Javadi, Morgan, Osborne

Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Andrew Hendrie, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/21, 3/9, 3/16

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 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. Provides process for challenging applications. Provides for judicial review of final orders. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Importance of bringing broadband to unserved and underserved areas
- Compliance with federal programs
- Need for better service in both rural and urban areas

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Provides for judicial review of final orders. Provides for process to challenge application.

BACKGROUND:

During the First Special Session of 2020, the Legislative Assembly created the Oregon Broadband Fund (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 A aligns Oregon statute with federal rules, guidance, and best practices related to federal broadband funds by eliminating restrictions on the Fund. The measure aligns Fund speed requirements with current technology needs and requirements of funding sources; it provides a process for public notice, for challenging an application, and an opportunity for comment on applications. There is also a process for reviewing final orders.