



LINK
OREGON

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Chair Janelle Bynum
House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 3201

Dear Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 3201 as introduced this session by Representatives Marsh, Owens, Neron, and Nosse and Senators Woods and Campos.

I serve as the executive director of Link Oregon, a non-profit organization established by the four largest research universities in Oregon and the State of Oregon's Enterprise Information Services unit. Link Oregon's principal mission is to operate a statewide, facilities-based, middle-mile network to serve both the public and the non-profit sectors across Oregon. A modern, sustainable broadband ecosystem across the state is critical for our founding members to connect effectively with as many Oregonians as possible for remote learning, telehealth, innovation, and digital government, among other essential purposes.

At this generational moment, unprecedented levels of federal funding are in the pipeline to address broadband infrastructure gaps. However, due to current statutory limits on the Broadband Fund, Oregon is at risk of losing some or all of its programmatic allocations that may well exceed \$600 million in aggregate. The existing statute also will limit Oregon's ability to spend the federal funding that the state does receive effectively and efficiently.

HB 3201 aims to bring Oregon's statute into alignment with federal rules, guidance, and best practices by eliminating unnecessary restrictions on the Broadband Fund. These restrictions conflict with the federal digital equity goals that include improving access to devices, removing language barriers, and ensuring that the infrastructure is in place to support the availability of affordable, reliable high-speed connectivity services.

HB 3201 is the product of a broadband workgroup led last year by Rep. Marsh. A broad range of stakeholders, including representatives from the Oregon Broadband Office, front-line community leaders, and public and private sector representatives participated in this inclusive process through a series of regular meetings.

HB 3201 will:

- Ensure that Broadband Fund speed requirements reflect current and evolving technology needs and requirements of funding sources.
- Continue a preference for unserved and underserved areas in Oregon.
- Provide a process for public notice and an opportunity for comment on applications that are already underway, ensuring that any conflicts are identified and addressed early in the proposal development process.
- Address the need for a robust, fair challenge process for grant awards through an independent Judicial Review Process as outlined in the Oregon Administrative Procedures Act (APA).

We support the adoption of this approach and the amendment to the earlier statute so that Oregon will be better prepared and equipped to receive all federal funding coming to the state and better aligned to distribute it efficiently and equitably to all Oregon communities — particularly those historically unserved and underserved —to work toward closing the digital divide.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input and for your continuing leadership to advance the level and reach of broadband service for all Oregonians.

Link Oregon endorses HB 3201.

Sincerely,



Steven Corbató
Executive Director