



**DOUGLAS COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**
TOM KRESS CHRIS BOICE TIM FREEMAN

1036 SE Douglas Ave., Room 217 → Roseburg, Oregon 97470

HB 3201 would disadvantage rural communities.

We have serious concerns about HB 3201. The BB Grant Fund was created in 2020 for two important reasons: to direct funding FIRST to unserved areas, and SECOND to underserved areas. The bill would remove those prioritizations and replace them with preferences on par with other preferences the Broadband Office may create.

This is not acceptable.

The purpose of this federal funding is to provide service for those communities that do not have any service, then to communities that have slow service, and only then to other uses.

As a rural county with many residents that lack broadband service, we recognize that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fix the digital divide that often separates rural and urban areas. If this funding is not used as intended to bring service to those who currently do not have it, and who are located in the remotest, and hardest to reach areas, then they will never get service.

Remote areas lack service because they do not have the density for the economics of serving them to make sense for providers. This funding is meant to bridge that gap and make serving the hardest to serve areas possible.

We are deeply concerned that if the prioritizations are removed, this funding will be spent in areas that already have one or more providers.

The Broadband Office does not need the flexibility it is seeking under this bill. This funding was intended to make sure those areas that are the hardest to serve finally get service. The Broadband Office should not have the “flexibility” to do anything else with what could become a fund of hundreds of millions of dollars.

It would be appropriate to update the speed definitions to match those used by the FCC but that is all HB 3201 needs to do. As drafted, we urge you to reject this bill, and what we see as an attempt to divert funds meant to ensure rural communities finally have access to high-speed internet.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Kress".

Commissioner Tom Kress, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Boice".

Commissioner Chris Boice

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Freeman".

Commissioner Tim Freeman