

Submitter: Kari May
On Behalf Of: OLA Broadband Subcommittee
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB885

March 30, 2023

Senate Committee on Education
900 Court St NE, HR B
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support SB 885.

My name is Kari May, and I am the Library Director for Jackson County Library Services, and the Chairperson for Oregon Library Association's Subcommittee on Broadband.

Jackson County Library District participates in the federal eRate program. We have hired a consultant to help us navigate the complicated federal filing process, and I recognize that many libraries, particularly in small and rural areas, do not have the budget, or the IT expertise in-house, to be able to participate. This bill would fund a position at the State Library to help libraries understand, apply for, and navigate the program.

In Jackson County, we were recently able to upgrade our internet speeds at all of our branches, and the cost was reimbursed 80% through eRate. Our connection speeds range from 100Mbps to 1 Gig at most of our branches, and 10 Gigs at our main library in Medford. We are fortunate to have robust broadband infrastructure throughout our system, which serves communities from the more urban setting in Medford to remote rural communities such as Ruch, Applegate, Butte Falls, and Prospect. In many communities, the library is the only internet connection some residents have. In Ruch and Applegate, for example, 40% of the students do not have access to the internet in their homes.

It's important that all libraries across the state have access to high speed internet access. Thank you for considering this bill – I hope you will see that a modest investment from the State can be leveraged to bring in millions more in federal dollars.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to pass SB 885.

Sincerely,

Kari May

Library Director, Jackson County Library Services