

April 25, 2023

Senator James Manning Jr., Chair  
Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

**Re: Support HB 3201-A**

Dear Chair Manning,

Skyline Ridge Neighbors is an all-volunteer, non-profit neighborhood association that advocates for and serves over 1,500 families in northwestern Multnomah County. I am writing on behalf of our community, which is vastly crippled by lack of high-speed internet access, to request your strong support of House Bill 3201-A.

High-speed internet is more essential than ever; yet throughout the pandemic, it has remained out of reach for many in our community. Unprecedented federal funding is coming to Oregon to address the gaps in internet availability, and this is our opportunity to equip Oregonians with better connectivity, for today and the future.

The Federal Communications Commission released a National Broadband Map to show where the internet is available nationwide. This site is terribly difficult to navigate, the map contains incorrect information regarding the area's internet service providers who vastly overstate their ability to provide service and who actually lie (apparently to the FCC) about where they are currently providing service. Furthermore, there is no "rubric" or category for us to share the cost of installation in our households, and there is no consideration of how much each one of us is paying per month to these providers. Also, while supposedly, much of Oregon has good internet service (according to providers' claims) this is erroneous because from our somewhat rural neighborhood's experience, actual speeds received do not begin to achieve what the providers claim they offer, especially considering the high costs charged.

Internet service providers require regulation; it's the "Wild West" out here, and internet "providers" take terrible advantage of customer/victims, who have very few to no options. Some examples of neighbors' experiences:

- Morgan and Justin Bors (next-door neighbors to me on Skyline Blvd.) were quoted \$36,000 by Comcast to extend their service just one more household. David Senders (one neighbor on Skyline Blvd. beyond the Bors) was recently quoted \$12,000 from Comcast to provide service to his residence.
- The Senders home had been serviced by Century Link for years, so when purchasing that house, they assumed that Century Link would continue service; but, no, Century Link told them they weren't adding any more accounts to their DSL service. The Senders are relegated to StarLink, which, required \$1,000 in equipment, and charges \$110 per month for spotty service.
- Comcast was kind to me insofar as pricing goes; however, one neighbor below had paid Comcast \$2,000 – ten years ago! – to have service, and the neighbor across the road,

paid \$1,500 to Comcast 10 years ago; so WE were allowed service based on thousands of dollars our neighbors had already invested.

- George Sowder, another Skyline Blvd. neighbor, was told by ViaSat their satellite would not be visible to his residence. He purchased Hughes Net, which often times sinks below 3 megabits; and is so slow for others as well, they complained, and Hughes summarily discontinued service to many households to remedy its “oversold” network. So Mr. Sowder added Starlink, paid \$600 for the equipment, and now pays over \$200 a month for both services that don’t allow him sufficient Zoom capability, which he needs for his meetings.
- Tracey Larvenz and his wife Susan Varnum on Logie Trail pay over \$500 a month in order to work full-time from their home; and due to the low, low quality of internet access, they subscribe to 5 different providers, and are often forced to jump from one of their providers to another just to keep going.

Transparent and accountable public processes are essential to ensure that internet service providers leverage this federal broadband funding to the benefit of our communities. The cost of internet service to consumers must also be carefully considered in the awarding of funding.

I am concerned that Oregon law limits public broadband funding to “unserved” and “underserved” locations, lacking 10/1 or 25/3 Mbps wireline and wireless broadband infrastructure, respectively. I understand there is some discussion about updating these standards slightly, but that only kicks the can down the road. Even those of us with slightly faster than “25/3” service lack the bandwidth necessary to accomplish the tasks of today or tomorrow. Communities should not be excluded from this opportunity because they have minimal service. These are the very communities that NEED the service and should not be relegated to an increased economic, class, and opportunity divide. We must use this opportunity to build best-in-class (fiber) infrastructure wherever possible. We all need better service, at a fair price.

Please do not waste this moment for Oregon residents. A successful Democracy depends upon its citizens receiving strong education. Let’s not further divide society by crippling economically struggling communities from receiving equal benefits – at the very least in internet access and capability. We see this in our neighborhood; we live it; and it’s not fair.

I urge you to pass House Bill 3201-A.

Sincerely,  
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