

Testimony Submitted by
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**To the Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World
Affairs**

04/27/2023

Regarding: Support for HB 3201A

Chair Manning, Vice-chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Megan Quintrell, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of Oregon Consumer Justice today in support of HB 3201A.

Oregon Consumer Justice (OCJ) organizes, advocates, and supports litigation to advance a justice movement that puts people first, ensuring all have the freedom to thrive and equitably share in our abundance of resources. For too long, flawed systems and economic policies that favor profits over people have stood in the way of this reality, with communities of color most often experiencing the most significant harm. Strengthened through responsive and reciprocal community relationships, OCJ is building a future where financial and business transactions can be relied upon as safe and where all Oregonians know and have recourse to exercise their consumer rights.

The importance of affordable and dependable high-speed internet access cannot be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in both economic and social development. An internet connection is essential for accessing educational and employment opportunities, healthcare services, social safety nets, and support networks.

OCJ stands in full support of HB 3201A, a bill that was developed through a highly collaborative and community-centered process, with input from front-line community leaders, as well as public and private sector representatives from across the state. This bill embodies the values of flexibility, forward-thinking, and

equity, by prioritizing the facilitation of broadband access, affordability, and adoption for all Oregonians.

OCJ is actively engaged in the ongoing dialogue on digital equity and stands in solidarity with frontline communities. Recent years have made it abundantly clear that the digital divide is a pervasive issue throughout the state. Shockingly, roughly 130,000 households in Oregon still lack internet access, with around 100,000 of those households situated in urban areas.¹

It is imperative for the state to recognize the necessity of prioritizing service to rural, frontier, and historically underserved communities. Broadband access strategy must not rely on outdated mapping and service speed requirements. Instead, long-term investments and comprehensive solutions are needed to ensure that all Oregonians have affordable and accessible broadband.

OCJ's team has witnessed firsthand the detrimental effects of exclusion and intentional digital redlining on our BIPOC communities. These communities have been severely underserved in terms of broadband investment, infrastructure, and education. It is imperative for the state to seek out solutions that prevent these communities from being left behind and excluded from the conversation.

We extend our gratitude for your ongoing leadership in addressing the digital divide and ensuring that all Oregonians have access to high-quality, affordable, reliable broadband. We eagerly anticipate the chance to engage with the committee further on these crucial matters.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Oregon's communities.

¹ Digital Equity Issue Brief: Critical Internet Needs in the Portland Area. EcoNorthwest. June 1, 2022.