

HB 3148 A -A3 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Prepared By: Michael Graham, Fiscal Analyst

Meeting Dates: 6/16

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure renames the Public Utility Commission's (PUC) low-income telecommunications plan of assistance the "Oregon Lifeline plan." The measure expands the Oregon Lifeline plan to include a one-time personal computing device benefit of \$100 for eligible low-income customers to purchase a new or used Internet-enabled computing device (i.e., desktop, laptop, or tablet). PUC may contract with third parties to assist in providing computing device benefits, including bulk purchasing of personal computing or ancillary devices. In addition, the measure removes the January 1, 2030, sunset date for the Oregon Lifeline plan; repeals the Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP) Advisory Committee and its oversight responsibilities; and repeals the requirement that PUC spend funds in the Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) on marketing and outreach for the Oregon Lifeline plan.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-A3 The -A3 amendment caps the one-time personal computing device benefit at \$100 per benefit recipient. The -A3 amendment also increases PUC's expenditure limitation for RSPF by \$1,977,012 Other Funds in the 2025-27 biennium for the Oregon Lifeline plan.

BACKGROUND:

HB 2663 (1987) initially established the requirement that all Oregonians have access to adequate and affordable telephone service. SB 69 (2019) amended the law to include high-speed internet service. As a result, PUC established Oregon Lifeline and several other programs.

Oregon Lifeline, previously known as the Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP), is an existing program that gives qualifying low-income Oregon households a monthly discount on phone or high-speed internet service.

The American Connectivity Program (ACP) was a federal program that provided a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. It also provided eligible households with a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. ACP ended on June 1, 2024. In response, the Broadband Affordability Workgroup was established to explore ways to sustain affordable broadband access to eligible households in Oregon. The Workgroup recommendations resulted in HB 3148 A, which makes various changes to the Oregon Lifeline plan.