

HB 3148 – Affordable Broadband: Expanding access & device support for Oregon

Background:

The federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) ended on June 1, 2024, leaving over 238,000 Oregon households without access to critical broadband subsidies. The ACP provided up to \$30 per month for high-speed internet, \$75 for those living on tribal lands, and offered a one-time \$100 benefit for purchasing devices. Without assistance, many Oregonian families lost access to affordable internet.

In response, Representative Pam Marsh convened a Broadband Affordability Workgroup encompassing a broad group of diverse voices, which met between June and September 2024 to explore ways to sustain affordable broadband access for eligible households. The group highlighted the necessity of affordable internet access and a computing device to fully participate in modern society.

Solution:

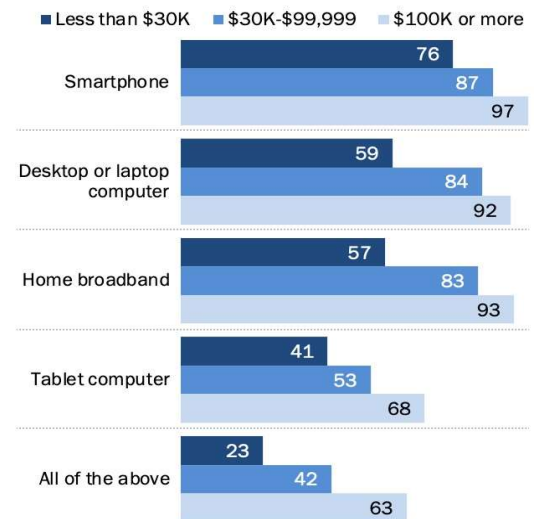
HB 3148 builds on the existing Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP), modernizing it into the renamed “Oregon Lifeline.” This avoids creating a new program, thereby reducing costs and administrative complexity. The key components include:

- **Increases Oregon Telephone/Broadband Subsidy:** Provides the Public Utility Commission (PUC) the authority to increase the existing Oregon subsidy from \$10 to \$15/month. Along with the federal Lifeline support, customers will be eligible for a total subsidy of \$24.95.
 - OTAP (soon to be Oregon Lifeline) is funded via a portion of the existing Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF). The proposed subsidy increase can be provided within the existing RSPF structure and does not require a statutory change to fees.
- **Device Assistance Benefit:** Introduces a one-time benefit of \$100 to assist Oregon Lifeline participants in purchasing internet-enabled devices, such as laptops, desktops, or tablets, up to \$600 in value.
- **PUC Flexibility:** Ensures flexibility for the PUC to adjust the subsidy and device benefit to meet program needs and the needs of the other RSPF programs and system upgrades.
- **Repeals the OTAP Advisory Committee:** Streamlines operations by removing unnecessary oversight.

For info: Rep Pam Marsh ~ rep.pammarsh@oregonlegislature.gov

Americans with lower incomes have lower levels of technology adoption

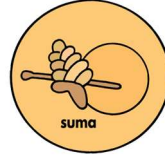
% of U.S. adults who say they have each of the following, by household income



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

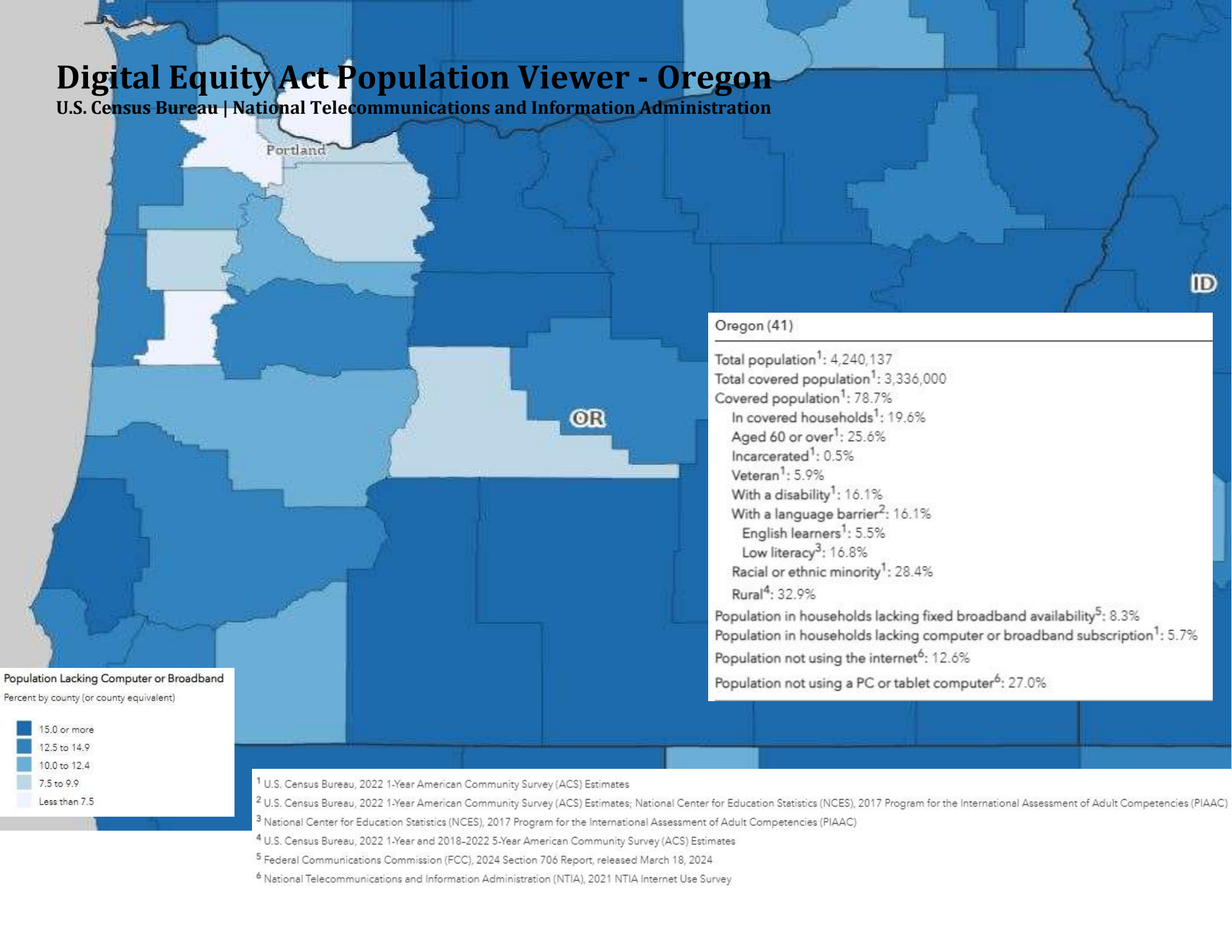
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Supporters



Digital Equity Act Population Viewer - Oregon

U.S. Census Bureau | National Telecommunications and Information Administration



Oregon (41)

Total population¹: 4,240,137

Total covered population¹: 3,336,000

Covered population¹: 78.7%

In covered households¹: 19.6%

Aged 60 or over¹: 25.6%

Incarcerated¹: 0.5%

Veteran¹: 5.9%

With a disability¹: 16.1%

With a language barrier²: 16.1%

English learners¹: 5.5%

Low literacy³: 16.8%

Racial or ethnic minority¹: 28.4%

Rural⁴: 32.9%

Population in households lacking fixed broadband availability⁵: 8.3%

Population in households lacking computer or broadband subscription¹: 5.7%

Population not using the internet⁶: 12.6%

Population not using a PC or tablet computer⁶: 27.0%

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 1-Year American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 1-Year American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2017 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

³ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2017 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 1-Year and 2018-2022 5-Year American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates

⁵ Federal Communications Commission (FCC), 2024 Section 706 Report, released March 18, 2024

⁶ National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), 2021 NTIA Internet Use Survey