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March 11, 2025

Chair Daniel Nguyen  
House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 3148

Dear Chair Nguyen and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 3148 as introduced this session by Representatives Marsh, Neron, and Wright and Senators Woods and D.B. Smith.

I serve as the executive director of Link Oregon, a non-profit organization established by the four largest research universities in Oregon – OHSU, Oregon State University, Portland State University, and the University of Oregon – and the State's Enterprise Information Services unit. Link Oregon's principal mission is to operate a statewide, facilities-based, middle-mile network to serve the network requirements of our founding members as well as the public and the non-profit sectors across Oregon.

A modern, sustainable broadband ecosystem across Oregon is critical for our members to connect effectively with as many citizens as possible to enable remote learning, telehealth, innovation, and digital government, among other essential purposes. In addition to broadband availability challenges, which are being addressed by the federally supported infrastructure programs within the Oregon Broadband Office (BDP and BEAD), the cost of Internet service and access devices (tablets, computers, etc.) are primary obstacles to the objective of achieving universal broadband service across Oregon.

HB 3148 first leverages and then modernizes the existing Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP) under the Public Utility Commission (PUC). This bill will make much-needed changes to reflect broadband as the underlying service and market realities, including rebranding the legacy OTAP program as **Oregon Lifeline**.

Under this legislation, the PUC will be empowered to increase the monthly broadband subsidy for Oregon Lifeline to \$15 with funding from the existing Residential Service Protection Fund. In addition, the bill establishes a one-time benefit of \$100 to assist eligible recipients with the purchase of low-cost, Internet-enabled devices, such as tablets and desktops under \$600 in price. Finally, HB 3148 will provide the PUC with the ongoing flexibility to adjust the monthly subsidy and device benefit amount to respond to evolving conditions.

We believe that it is critical for the Legislature to help address this affordability gap for the neediest Oregonians. Last year Congress failed to extend the groundbreaking Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), through which the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) provided monthly broadband benefits of up to \$30 per eligible household (and up to \$75 for Tribal members). **The expiration of this benefit impacted over 238,000 Oregon households.** In addition, considerable uncertainty now surrounds the federal Lifeline program for broadband subsidy as the constitutionality of the underlying federal Universal Service Fund (USF) is under consideration by the U.S. Supreme Court with a ruling expected by late spring.

HB 3148 is the collaborative product of an open, diverse broadband working group led last year by Rep. Marsh. A broad range of stakeholders, including a representative of the Oregon Broadband Office, front-line community leaders, and public and private sector representatives, participated in this inclusive process through a series of regular virtual meetings. I had the opportunity to participate once again with other Oregon broadband colleagues as a member of this working group.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input and for your continuing leadership to advance the availability and affordability of robust broadband service for all Oregonians.

Link Oregon proudly endorses HB 3148.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Corbató", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steven Corbató  
Executive Director