



Including everyone in our digital future

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March, 12, 2025

To Chair Daniel Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Ed Diehl and Shannon Isadore, and members of the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade

**Regarding: Support for House Bill 3148 - Affordable Broadband Public Hearing**

Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Diehl and Isadore, and members of the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade,

My name is Juan Muro, Executive Director at Free Geek.

Free Geek is a nonprofit organization based in Portland, Oregon. Our mission is to sustainability reuse technology, enable digital access, and provide education to create a community that empowers people to realize their potential.

Every year Free Geek serves more than 4000 Oregonians and community based organizations through our free digital inclusion programs and 10,000 Oregonians through our affordable technology program. Each device disbursed, at no or low cost, comes with the offer to participate in our digital navigation services, remote support, digital literacy classes and workshops.

We recognize the need for affordable broadband as part of our efforts to help our community members achieve digital adoption. The goal is that every person in Oregon is able to utilize digital tools to advance, compete and participate in this digital era. At Free Geek we combine the purchase of an affordable laptop with digital inclusion support.

Free Geek's affordable technology program helps our organization earn unrestricted income while also making affordable computer devices, accessories, and peripherals available for community members year round. At the same time, we are able to divert 1.5 million pounds of e-waste from landfill each year in partnership with Oregon's E-Cycles program.

Free Geek employs 40-50 Oregonians and also has a professional development program for staff who want to advance a career in the nonprofit or technology sector. Most of our leadership team matured into the executive roles we have today through these Free Geek programs. Many more have gone on to earn high paying jobs at Intel, Multnomah County

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Library, NTEN, Hacienda CDC and AfroVillage PDX, Project LEDO, Guerreras Latina, Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Ridwell, and many other nonprofit organizations.

HB3148 includes a device benefit program of a one-time \$100 towards the purchase of a device of a value of up to \$600 that can include necessary accessories like a carrying case, monitors and other peripherals. With a purchase of an internet-enabled device as defined in the bill, community members at Free Geek have access to accessories, monitors, cables and other peripherals that would enhance the full function and potential of the device at no additional cost.

HB3148 also gives the Public Utility Commission (PUC) the ability to raise the monthly broadband benefit included in Lifeline. Unfortunately, many Portland area providers choose not to participate in Lifeline leaving many eligible urban and rural residents who have limited provider options without access to these benefits. We still believe this bill has a positive impact on our community and therefore worth supporting.

Free Geek is asking this committee to consider the positive impact this bill could have on small technology repair businesses and nonprofit organizations like Free Geek that are not ISP's but provide affordable technology and support options to communities in Oregon.

There is an opportunity for all eligible Oregonians to benefit from this bill with the -1 Amendment. Language through the rulemaking process encouraging a list of Oregon organizations that provide affordable technology hardware to support the device benefit program introduced in this bill would be a great start.

Free Geek is in support of HB3148 to ensure Oregonians have access to affordable broadband and devices they need to complete in today's digital era. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your commitment to keeping our community members online.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juan Muro", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Juan Manuel Muro, Jr  
Executive Director, Free Geek