



Senate Bill 426A
Testimony in Opposition
Brant Wolf
On behalf of the
Oregon Broadband Association
House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
May 7, 2025

Chair Grayber and members of the Committee, I am Brant Wolf, EVP of the Oregon Broadband Association (OBA). The OBA represents providers of high-speed internet access operating throughout rural and remote Oregon as well as urban locations. The OBA does not represent Cable or Wireless providers.

As a matter of principle, the OBA and all our members firmly believe all workers should be fairly and justly compensated for their labor and expertise.

Upon review and legal analysis, the OBA believes that Senate Bill 426A presents serious challenges for all our members but in particular, the small family owned or cooperatively governed providers we represent.

Many of these companies are very small, with perhaps only 3 or 4 employees. These companies frequently have no options but to hire contractors to perform work such as trenching or boring in order to deploy fiber-based services to rural Oregonians. They simply cannot afford to acquire and own the equipment or directly employ and train the workers needed to operate the equipment.

With SB 426A, our members would have no other choice than to contemplate that they would be responsible for any wage or benefit claims made by individuals they *did not ever directly hire or employ*. In effect, SB

426A, if passed, would mean our small, family-owned or cooperatively governed broadband providers would have to *pay fair and just wages twice*.

This result is *unfair* and *unjust*.

The OBA would like to point out the fact that the ORS already contains remedies for workers with legitimate wage and benefit claims. Individuals may file wage claims through the Bureau of Labor and Industries under ORS 652 or file a civil lawsuit. Additionally, ORS 87.010 allows “any person performing labor ...” to file a construction lien also. While these remedies might be imperfect, the OBA believes it is better public policy to address any shortcomings in existing law rather than burden providers with additional, bad public policy.

Over the past few sessions, the Oregon Legislature has recognized the vital need for broadband infrastructure. Legislation has been passed to facilitate the expansion of fiber-based broadband service. If this Committee passes SB 426A then some of that progress will inevitably be halted. The additional resource strain of this bill will cause some of our members to decide not to pursue the broadband loan and grant programs past Legislatures worked hard to implement and administer.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the federal government has recently introduced an entirely new level of confusion and uncertainty with respect to the Broadband Equity Affordability and Deployment (BEAD) program. Our members have already struggled to make a determination about participating in this federal, once in a generation, broadband funding program. The last thing our members need is for their state legislature in Salem to introduce even more uncertainty.

The Oregon Broadband Association urges members of the Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards to vote no on SB 426A.

Thank you. I am happy to answer questions or address concerns about the OBA position on this matter.