

March 29, 2017

Rep. Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Subject: City of Eugene opposition to HB 3268

Dear Chair Greenlick and members of the committee:

The City of Eugene has telecommunications policies regarding endorsing and promoting universal and affordable residential telecommunications service, such as the Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF), an important Lifeline program of the OPUC.

We are dismayed to see that HB 3268 would remove that program from State supervision and makes other related changes which have questionable underlying rationale.

In addition, the bill retains the Telecommunication Devices Access Program (TDAP), which provides loans for specialized telephone equipment to individuals with disabilities, and the Oregon Telecommunications Relay Service (OTRS), a free service that allows individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or who has a speech disability to place and receive calls through specially trained operators, until the sunset date of January 1, 2020. However, there is no provision at all about which agency, if any, would be administering the programs because the bill only specifies that it is repealing the OPUC as the administrator of these programs.

If there is no state program for the provision of OTRS, the responsibility falls to common carriers (wire and radio), pursuant to Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Under this bill, the Oregon Telecommunications Assistance Program (OTAP), which you're already aware is the state counterpart to the Federal Communications Commission's Lifeline program, would cease to exist, affecting approximately 60,000 low-income customers who will either see their bill increase or not be able to receive additional wireless minutes at no charge.

Lastly, in addition, Senate Bill 84, which mirrors existing DOR statute in requiring interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol service providers to collect the RSPF surcharge from their subscribers, will be rendered moot.

If there is substantiated cause for concern about the Residential Service Protection Fund, of which we are unaware, I hope that information can be examined in an open forum before this bill moves any further. Thank you for your consideration of our opposition to HB 3268.

Sincerely,

Pam Berrian
Telecommunications Program Manager