

February 2, 2018

The Honorable David Gomberg, State Representative  
Chairman, House Interim Committee on Economic Development and Trade  
900 Court St. NE, H-471  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Gomberg,

We are Technology Leaders from InterMountain ESD writing in support of HB 4023 and the opportunity for our schools to secure funding in support of high-speed broadband. Scalable and affordable access is essential to provide Oregon students with personalized learning opportunities in this digital age. Many Oregon schools cannot achieve special fiber construction without leveraging FCC's E-rate State Matching Fund program, **which will cover up to 90% of the upgrade if the state will create a matching fund and contribute 10% of the project cost.**

Today, many schools lack affordable, dependable, high-speed Internet access. Reliability is a big challenge in our region. Currently, Elgin School District experiences a barrage of service disruptions. This may mean that the service provider needs to send someone more than 10 miles out on a snowmobile to Mount Fanny (elevation 7,020 and average annual snowfall 260 inches) to reposition a microwave and restore Internet service and learning.

The build challenges faced by remote rural Oregon include geography, distance, and lack of providers and/or available facilities. Until recently, Huntington School District had to spend \$1,000 a month for a single T-1 or 1.54Mbps in an attempt to operate their district. This limited operations such as conducting State assessment testing and routinely required transporting devices 40 minutes to our ESD tech office to download updates. Their current LTE solution has been a great improvement delivering just under 20Mbps. Nonetheless, the improved speed is still less than typical home services.

Three rural Eastern Oregon Districts, Elgin, Imbler, and Huntington have taken the preliminary steps to be eligible to file for 2018-2019 E-Rate by filing 470's and publishing RFP's for fiber builds. We have interest from providers, but unless schools obtain financial support with the substantial installation cost, the projects remain cost prohibitive. A special construction fiber build to Elgin School District is roughly 20 miles with an estimated cost of \$1.82 million. Imbler School District is only 8 miles from Elgin and along the route. The build to Huntington is approximately 34 miles estimated at \$4.7 million.

Elgin, Imbler and Huntington School Districts are prime candidates to take advantage of the additional E-rate dollars for projects this year and need the State to allocate the funds to take them into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Fiber brings reliable, affordable, and scalable access for the long term and is a solid investment for students and their families. Internet access brings equity in experience to all students with almost everything delivered online.

We would respectfully ask for your support to establish the State matching funds, on behalf of our rural Oregon districts as well as the many others across the state.

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