

LAKE COUNTY EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

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Date: February 2, 2018

To: The Honorable Pam Marsh
House Interim Committee on Economic Development and Trade

From: Sara Sarensen, Business Manager
Lake County ESD

Dear House Interim Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 4023 that would create a fund to provide matching dollars for schools to use alongside E-Rate funding. As you may know, Paisley School District and a few other districts recently received this benefit. In order to communicate my gratitude for these matching funds, I need to describe our desperation for internet access.

Up until just three years ago, Paisley School was limited to two T-1 lines with a total of 3.08 mbps bandwidth provided through CenturyLink. The impact on their regular activities was significant and schoolwide. The business manager regularly completed ODE reports from home using her own internet; state testing had to be well planned to ensure the internet connection would not be completely overwhelmed by the added demand of one classroom testing at a time; online classes for the high school were very limited. If an ODE report couldn't be completed on this bandwidth, you can imagine the impact in the classrooms!

In May 2015, the school was finally able to access higher speed internet through T-Net Broadband Internet, a Lake County business that invested in a tower so that the fiber connection in Lakeview (45 miles away) could be used to microwave high speed internet into the town of Paisley. This was a huge improvement for the school as they were able to finally access 25 mbps speed, and the district is very grateful to T-Net for their investment in the community. Despite this progress, Paisley's internet access is still not all that the school needs it to be.

Paisley's struggle for adequate bandwidth will finally come to resolution in June 2018 when the project to lay 45 miles of fiber optic from Lakeview to Paisley is complete. At that point, the school will have a 100 mbps connection and be able to add to that bandwidth as demand increases over the coming years.

I am certain other rural schools in Oregon have the same struggles Paisley School has dealt with. In today's academic environment, inadequate bandwidth is an unnecessary obstacle in a student's path to success.

The cost of a project of this size is very prohibitive. Paying 10% was difficult enough for our school, let alone paying the 30% it would have been without the match funds. As you decide on whether or not to create a fund to provide assistance to schools like Paisley School, please understand that these match funds did not make our project easier and they not make it happen a year or two sooner. These funds made it possible to happen at all. We are very grateful for the investment Oregon made in Lake County and the town of Paisley.

Sincerely,

Sara Sarensen