

Testimony of Brant Wolf

Oregon Telecommunications Association

HB 4023A

Joint Legislative Committee on Information Management and Technology

February 23rd, 2018

The Oregon Telecommunications Association (OTA) represents 32 Incumbent, Competitive, Municipal and Tribal telecommunications service providers. Our members offer state of the art data, voice and video service in rural and in some cases remote areas of Oregon.

The OTA supports HB 4023A and has testified to that effect in prior hearings. In particular, our members agree that establishing the Connecting Oregon Schools Fund in order to match state funds with federal E-rate funds is an important element in Oregon's efforts to ensure that local schools and libraries have access to fiber-based broadband. OTA members currently partner with schools in using the federal E-rate program and those partnerships work well.

The OTA is opposed to this Committee adopting the -13 amendments. The OTA is not opposed to working with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) in order to address the continuing telecommunications needs of certain areas in Oregon.

In particular, the language found on page 2, line 18, regarding communities of interest, is very broad and therefore troubling.

We feel Section 6 (1) (b) should be deleted in its entirety. Local government already has the ability to establish their telecommunications networks and many have done so. This language appears to establish a method for avoiding Section 6 (1)(a).

In 2017 the OTA introduced legislation that was passed and signed into law giving the Oregon Public Utility Commission the authority to determine whether the Oregon Universal Service Fund should be used to support broadband capable networks in rural Oregon. That simple notion was an idea that the OTA worked on with legislators and our telecommunications colleagues throughout the interim leading up to the full session in 2017. As simple an idea as that was, it took considerable effort to pass that

legislation. Despite the lengthy amount of time and openness with which we worked on that legislation, it was still amended before final passage.

Our members recognize that there are areas that are unserved with fiber-based broadband and other areas that may be underserved. A necessary first step, prior to the Legislature adopting language similar to that contained in the -13, is to determine with some level of certainty where those areas may be and what the needs are.

We also acknowledge that the time may have come to contemplate issues such as a minimum benchmark standard for broadband speed. The OTA believes that establishing needs and possible legislative fixes is a process that should be undertaken during the interim, not in a rushed short session of the Legislature.

In summary, the OTA supports HB 4023A and respectfully requests that the Committee pass that bill without adopting the -13 amendment.