

June 22, 2020

Senator Peter Courtney, Co-Chair
Representative Tina Kotek, Co-Chair
Representative Pam Marsh
Joint Interim Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE,
Salem, Oregon 97301
Remote Meeting

Re: EducationSuperHighway Testimony in Support of House Bill 4079

Dear Co-Chairs Peter Courtney and Tina Kotek:

EducationSuperHighway is America's leading non-profit focused on upgrading the Internet access in every public school classroom in the United States. We believe that digital learning represents an unprecedented opportunity to provide every student with equal access to educational opportunity and that every school requires high speed broadband to make that opportunity a reality.

Over the last eight years, our work has made K-12 broadband infrastructure a national priority at both the federal and state level. In 2013, the President launched the ConnectED program to bring high speed broadband to every classroom and a year later the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) increased funding for K-12 broadband by \$2.5 billion per year. These actions were followed by tremendous support for connecting schools at the state level. As of today, 85 Governors, including Oregon Governor Brown, have publicly committed to upgrading their schools for the 21st century. As a result, over 40 million more students have access to sufficient minimum connectivity in their classrooms than in 2014.

In the context of this national effort to upgrade America's K-12 broadband infrastructure, I write to support House Bill 4079. EducationSuperHighway's work with states has shown that the path to ensuring all students have access to digital learning must start with connecting every school to scalable high-speed broadband infrastructure – either a fiber optic cable or a modern, high-capacity microwave connection. Today, there are still schools in Oregon that lack scalable infrastructure and without the support of House Bill 4079 will be unable to obtain this critical infrastructure.

Our work in Oregon shows the importance of infrastructure upgrades to unlock the potential of digital learning. Since 2016, we have worked with the Oregon Department of Education, Educational Service Districts, and directly with districts to assist and support them in their pursuit of upgraded broadband infrastructure. Our support has included providing pricing transparency tools such as Compare and Connect K12; working directly with district and ESD's on bid materials to ensure they are positioned for maximum success; and sharing strategies and best practices learned from our work across the country.

Together we worked to develop a State Match Fund Plan which culminated in the establishment of the Connecting Oregon Schools Fund in 2018. This fund enabled Oregon schools to access additional subsidies from the federal E-rate program for the construction of high speed broadband infrastructure.

HB 4079 provides the framework for continued public school broadband upgraded success into the 21st Century. It is without hesitation that EducationSuperHighway supports enactment of the proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jack Lynch

Jack Lynch
Director of State Engagements
EducationSuperHighway