



## **Oregon Cable Industry's Response to COVID-19**

As Oregon – and the rest of the country – continue to face an unprecedented public health crisis, Oregon's cable providers have stepped up to ensure individuals and families can work and learn from home regardless of economic circumstance and geographic location. The Oregon Cable Telecommunications Association (OCTA) and our members have prioritized increasing access to broadband to meet the increased need as much of the state transitions to online education and work. OCTA's members have partnered with schools, businesses, and government entities to help ensure some of the most vulnerable and distressed Oregonians have access to the broadband they need to continue their education online during the pandemic.

### **National Response**

#### **NCTA K-12 Bridge to Broadband**

The National Cable Telecommunications Association (NCTA) recently launched K-12 Bridge to Broadband, a groundbreaking public-private initiative that aims to connect students from low-income families to the internet for remote and hybrid learning. Under the initiative, cable providers partner with school districts and states to identify unconnected student households and offer opportunities to increase access to broadband for low-income families. Under the K-12 Bridge to Broadband initiative, nearly every school in the service area of NCTA members, which offer broadband service to 80% of U.S. homes, will be eligible to participate.

### **Oregon Response**

OCTA members understand how important it is to ensure Oregon students have the broadband connection they need to participate in online learning. Members led the way on developing innovative solutions to the COVID-19 crisis, and have actively engaged with our public partners to identify how to quickly address the challenges facing Oregon students. OCTA and our members have appreciated the opportunity to engage with the Department of Education and with school boards across the state to connect kids to our current offerings and to help districts determine how best to ensure their students can access digital learning.

#### **Keeping Kids Connected**

- Cable providers partnered with Oregon Department of Education and local school districts to help low-income students gain access to broadband during the crisis
- OCTA members have pledged to keep public hotspots open to the public to bridge connectivity gaps
- Providers are offering special discounts and payment programs to students and their families

#### **Financial Assistance**

- Providers continue to work with customers to tailor service packages and offer repayment plans for those facing financial hardships
- Debt forgiveness options and extended repayment plans have been offered through the end of 2020
- Many providers have expanded their low-income offerings and have provided no cost service for the first 60 days in order to get families connected to broadband

#### **Community Support**

- OCTA members have provided laptops, desktops, and pre-paid internet access to low-income job seekers
- Provided connection for the COVID-19 emergency hospital at the Salem Fairgrounds
- Donated thousands of essential PPE items to Oregon's healthcare workforce
- Donated airtime to run 1,000 COVID-19 public service announcement spots per week, including PSAs from the American Red Cross
- Provided grants to organizations providing broadband education, technology and training