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February 11, 2019

Chair Lively
House Committee on Economic Development
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2173 and HB 2184

Dear Chair Lively and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2173 and HB 2184. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 40 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice.

Together, these bills support economic development in rural Oregon by providing capacity to access and expand broadband infrastructure and services. Business Oregon currently oversees the state's Regional Solutions program, in which the state is divided into 11 regions, each of which, among other things, is charged with locally determining their priorities for economic development. Six of those 11 have concluded that broadband investment is necessary for their communities to grow and thrive.

HB 2173 is responsive to this need, by creating the Oregon Broadband Office within Business Oregon, and directing it to take actions to close the existing "digital divide," focusing on unserved and underserved communities that lack broadband infrastructure. HB 2184 expands the Oregon Universal Service Fund to stabilize existing fund and create a new Broadband Fund.

We urge you to support HB 2173 and HB 2184. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Deputy Director