



February 3, 2020
House Revenue Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: HB 4079 – Broadband Fund

Chair Nathanson and members of the Committee,

The Oregon Rural Health Association wishes to voice its full support for HB 4079 which will provide a clear funding stream for broadband infrastructure in Oregon.

More and more, rural hospitals and clinics are relying on high-speed internet access to bridge the urban-rural gap and provide their patients with services that are often found only in much larger cities. At a time when the health care workforce continues to tighten, access to this type of health care delivery is essential for our rural communities.

What's more, services traditionally conducted in every hospital, such as the reading of x-rays, are increasingly being outsourced. If broadband goes out for a time, that means hospitals such as Lake District Hospital are forced to go without critical services.

By making grants available to communities such as Lakeview, the legislature has the opportunity to subsidize what would otherwise be cost-prohibitive infrastructure needs such as building redundancies in the network. That type of project would help ensure that even the most rural portions of our state have equitable access to critical health care services.

As Oregon looks at its critical infrastructure needs, broadband must be included. The development and maintenance of broadband in Oregon is essential to providing access to education and health care in our rural communities.