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**Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020**  
**Testimony in Support of SB 1603**  
**Andrea Meyer, Director of Government Relations**  
**June 24, 2020**

AARP Oregon is pleased to submit testimony in support of SB 1603. AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With 510,000 member in Oregon, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

Throughout the country, AARP actively supports broadband deployment to unserved communities and also supports policies and programs that facilitate broadband adoption. Our members include those who live in communities with residential broadband service, who are internet-savvy, and who use broadband internet access on a daily basis. Our members also include those who live in communities without broadband internet access. And, finally, we have members who simply lack the digital know-how to avail themselves of the many benefits of high-speed access to the internet.

Especially at this time, when an increasing number of workers are engaging in telework, students are utilizing remote learning, and small businesses are seeking to remain operational through remote delivery or takeaway sales, access to robust telecommunications and high-speed internet networks is critical.

SB 1603 furthers the important goal of bringing broadband to areas that are now on the wrong side of the digital divide. These communities find themselves left out of the information economy because broadband providers have not found it profitable to serve them.

SB 1603 would not only broaden the pool of services required to contribute to the universal service fund, but would also prioritize the targeting of funds to unserved and underserved communities.

The benefits of high-speed internet access to older adults are well-recognized. Affordable, reliable internet access helps older adults to age in place productively and safely with a higher quality of life than would otherwise exist. The broadband platform supports access to telemedicine, civic engagement, entertainment, on-line learning and other internet-based applications that address isolation and health challenges.

Real Possibilities

