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Make Education Accessible – Support SB 1603

Oregon Education Advocates Support Increased Funding for Broadband Access

Nearly 400,000 Oregonians do not have broadband access in their homes. This means many Oregon students, especially in rural school districts, do not have the same learning tools as their peers. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, students without internet access had to go the extra mile to complete homework assignments – either by going to their local library or staying late at school. Now, amidst the pandemic, many of those lifelines are gone. While students in both rural and urban areas are affected by this solvable issue, low-income students and students of color are disproportionately affected. **Without access, our most vulnerable students are being shut out and held back from their more privileged peers.**

SB 1603 is incredibly timely and needed to provide a stable funding source for broadband expansion in communities that cannot currently get broadband service.

SB 1603 dedicates a portion of funds – up to 20 percent -- to education providers through the Connect Oregon Schools Fund, which prioritizes funding for schools and Education Service Districts that have the opportunity to access matching funds from the federal government to expand broadband access. With more than 50 schools in Oregon that do not currently have broadband access for their students and teachers, and more than 400,000 Oregonians who do not have access in their homes, we need all the funding we can get to deploy broadband as fast as possible so our students do not continue to miss out on their education.

The legislature has already said that broadband is critical infrastructure. It has never been more critical for our kids. **Please pass SB 1603 to bridge the digital divide and remove a barrier to accessing key educational tools.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Contact: Elizabeth Howe, 503-910-3270, Elizabeth@HowePA.com

*from the desk of
Representative
Sollman*

