

February 1, 2022

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Cate, Vice Chair Kropf, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support for House Bill 4092.

It is almost impossible to function, let alone thrive in our society today without access to high speed and reliable broadband internet service. Broadband infrastructure supports and enables every aspect of work and life. Where you live in Oregon can make a difference about whether you have the needed accessibility to fast, sustainable broadband which can make a significant difference to families, students, healthcare providers, business owners, police, firefighters.

In rural areas, education, economic development, agriculture, public health, public safety, energy management, national and global connectivity, government and civic engagement are all dependent on "closing the digital divide".

According to a white paper from The Pew Charitable Trust dated September 1, 2021, "Research indicates that people living in rural areas struggle to obtain broadband connections mainly because of the low density of housing. Fewer people living in a community, especially over large swaths of land, translates into higher costs to build and maintain the most common broadband technologies."

I live in a small town with 20,000 citizens in a rural area that had the foresight, decades ago, to build its own broadband internet service, the Ashland Fiber Network (AFN). I want my fellow Oregonians to have the same fast, reliable internet access that I have.

To ensure digital inclusion and equity and make connectivity more accessible to all Oregon citizens major investments need to be made. With the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies and funding from the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) going directly to the states, Oregon can leverage an expected \$200 million dollars to expand internet service in underserved communities.

I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 4092.

Respectfully,

Regina Ayars
Public Policy Chair
Ashland Branch
American Association of University Women of Oregon