

February 1, 2022

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

I am writing to convey my strong support for House Bill 4092. I do so as a member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Oregon and as part of the Ashland AAUW Branch Public Policy team.

Oregonians, no matter where they live, whether in rural or urban areas, deserve access to reliable broadband internet service. But, as we have seen during the pandemic, such access is not equal throughout our state. Poorer Oregonians, especially those in rural areas, who lack broadband service miss out on opportunities for jobs, small business expansion, education, medical care, social and family connections, participation in religious services, public health and safety information, civic engagement, and more.

Large parts of my county are rural, and I have participated in numerous meetings and classes where participants from outlying areas are forced to drop out because of unreliable broadband service. We have seen children, bundled up in the cold, sitting in parking lots of established businesses, trying to use that wi-fi to complete their online homework because they lacked connectivity at their more rural homes.

Ensuring that digital inclusion makes connectivity accessible to all Oregon citizens will require major investments. Fortunately, federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act will be coming directly to the states. Oregon will be able to leverage an expected \$200 million dollars to expand internet service in underserved communities, if only we are prepared to set up the organization to use this aid.

House Bill 4092 will allow us to do this, and I urge you to vote Yes on this bill.

Respectfully,

Mary Renaud
Member of Public Policy team
Ashland Branch, American Association of University Women of Oregon