

February 2, 2022



Chair Representative John Lively  
Vice-Chair Representative Jami Cate  
Vice-Chair Representative Jason Kropf  
Representative Daniel Bonham  
Representative Bobby Levy  
Representative Ricki Ruiz  
Representative Brad Witt

Representative Zach Hudson  
Representative Rachel Prusak  
Representative Kim Wallan

RE: Testimony in favor of HB 4092

To the Members of the House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity:

For the record, my name is Jennifer Groth, and I serve as the Director of Policy & Partnerships for Rural Development Initiatives (RDI). Our interest in HB 4092 is informed by our work supporting community and economic vitality in more than 300 rural communities in Oregon over the last 30 years. We know from long experience that expanding access to broadband for underserved rural communities is critical to their survival and future growth.

We are grateful to the Legislature for recognizing the vital role that the Oregon Broadband Office plays in the improvement of rural infrastructure; full staffing of that office will provide valuable support to Oregon's small communities - places we know are chronically under-resourced and understaffed. The communities we support are excited to see Oregon at the leading edge of the conversation to understand and demonstrate the best way to get broadband to remote places.

Research published just last week with funding from The Ford Family Foundation reinforces what we already know: in order to access resources to improve their communities, rural people need technical support and match funding for federal grants. This bill provides that support, for what we can all agree is essential infrastructure for rural economic vitality.

We understand that there is often debate about what type of bills are appropriate for the short session. We are grateful to the long list of sponsors of this bill, for recognizing that quick action in this case will allow the state to leverage significant federal funding for broadband. It is essential to ensure Oregon is ready to accept and deploy this once-in-a-lifetime funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and for your leadership in bringing this important economic infrastructure to Oregon's rural places.

Jennifer Groth  
Director of Policy & Partnerships  
Rural Development Initiatives

