



LINK
OREGON

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February 2, 2022

Chair John Lively, Vice Chair Jami Cate, Vice Chair Jason Kropf, and
Members of the House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 4092 and -2 Amendment

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

I am writing in support of HB 4092 and the -2 amendment introduced for consideration this session by Representative Marsh, Senator Beyer, and nearly forty of their fellow legislators.

I serve as the executive director of Link Oregon, a non-profit organization established by the four largest research universities in Oregon and the Enterprise Information Services unit within the State of Oregon. Link Oregon operates a statewide, facilities-based, middle-mile network serving the public and non-profit sectors in Oregon.

We are at a watershed moment. With the secure knowledge that several large tranches of broadband funding are coming to Oregon as part of the anticipated \$100 billion aggregate federal investment nationwide, we are resolute that Oregon must be ready. HB 4092 will help ensure that we are prepared to exploit this once-in-a-career opportunity to close persistent broadband gaps.

At Rep. Marsh's request, I co-led, along with my colleague Stuart Taubman of Zayo Networks, a middle-mile infrastructure planning group this past year. This group convened representatives of Oregon telecommunications providers and developed a [summary report](#) that included twelve recommendations for improving Oregon's broadband infrastructure with a particular focus on critical middle mile components, including resiliency considerations, robust Internet exchanges, and improved mapping. HB 4092 provides a strong foundation for achieving many of the goals outlined in that report.

We support the transition of the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council (OBAC) to provide support and oversight for the Oregon Broadband Office (OBO), whose work is critical to securing state funding and ensuring that it is efficiently and equitably delivered to communities across Oregon. We applaud the decision to retain Tribal and telehealth representation on OBAC in addition to the new position focused on underrepresented communities. We know that it will take a strong alliance of public and private stakeholders to plan strategically to leverage this

unparalleled opportunity to enable the next round of equitable digital transformation in Oregon.


If there are amendments to this bill, we would ask that consideration be given to several areas that could benefit from additional attention. These include:

1. We support the addition of a higher education representative to OBAC (to be distinguished from the traditional representative from the K-12 sector). Oregon higher education institutions have been involved with Internet development and broadband application innovation for over 35 years and continue this level of strategic engagement through its partial funding of Link Oregon.
2. We would encourage a more flexible approach in designing the OBAC grant advisory committee to ensure that it draws, on an as-needed basis, the appropriate, impartial subject matter experts who can best assess the viability of proposals under the wide range of broadband programs that the OBO is expected to manage. The program foci may range from middle-mile and last-mile network implementation to digital equity, affordability, and digital literacy.

HB 4092 and the -2 amendment will prepare Oregon to make strategic use of federal funds for bridging the digital divide by building a statewide broadband infrastructure that supports Link Oregon's vision for our state. That vision includes greater access to education, healthcare, and government services for all Oregonians; improved data transparency and streamlined coordination across agencies; new avenues for economic development; and added resiliency—all positioning Oregon at the forefront of research, sustainability, and innovation.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input and for your continuing leadership to advance the level and reach of broadband services for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Steven Corbató
Executive Director