



February 21, 2023

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Morgan and Nguyen, and members of the committee,

My name is Trevor Beltz and I am the Manager of Government Relations and Public Affairs for the Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA). Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of House Bill 3201.

In 2020, during the height of the pandemic, we saw our community members struggle to find ways to access education resources, stay in touch with family and friends, and remain connected to their livelihoods while working from home. In rural Oregon we saw the gaps in broadband infrastructure laid bare.

To close those gaps, TCCA decided to join the American Connection Project, a coalition of over 175 businesses and organizations collectively advocating for better maps and data, affordability and inclusion increases, and infrastructure investment. In the fall of 2021, Congress signed into law legislation that rolled out a \$65 billion investment in broadband internet to help address these goals and help close the digital divide in America. TCCA also sponsored broadband fellowships through Lead for America's American Connection Corps, leading to fellows serving in Tillamook, Morrow, Josephine, and Gilliam Counties, where they have helped local organizations identify the needs and next steps in getting broadband deployed in their communities.

HB 3201 makes changes to the State Broadband Fund in accordance with the Federal Treasury guidance, allowing Oregon the opportunity to maximize the amount of potential broadband funding coming from the federal government and have the ability to direct that money to projects that need it most. The bill allows unserved and underserved projects to move forward at the same time, as long as funding is available to serve eligible unserved locations. With an



open and transparent grant application, HB 3201 provides equitable access to project funding to rural communities who may not otherwise be eligible or competitive with projects in urban areas. Many communities across our state do not have the capacity and technical resources available to leverage state and federal programs to build out the needed infrastructure to close the digital divide in their communities; increased access to state and federal funds will provide much needed assistance to ensure families and communities can access broadband for the many vital services it enables.

This bill is key to ensuring investment focuses on communities that need it most. Thank you for your consideration of HB 3201 and your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Trevor Beltz  
Manager of Government Relations & Public Affairs  
Tillamook County Creamery Association