



**Commissioner Carmen Rubio**  
City of Portland

02/21/2023

Representative Janelle Bynum, Chair  
House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business  
900 Court St. NE, HR F, Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair, Bynum, Vice-Chairs Morgan and Nguyen, and Members of the Committee,

The City of Portland enthusiastically supports HB3201.

HB3201 takes a vital step in ensuring that Oregon is eligible to receive the millions in Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) federal funds to deploy broadband service and infrastructure across our state. These funds target unserved, underserved, and tribal communities to improve digital equity in historically unserved and underserved communities across the state. This legislation ensures the Oregon Broadband fund is set up for the critical work before us.

The COVID-19 pandemic both highlighted and exacerbated the digital divide that exists here in Oregon that continues to leave rural, frontier, and historically underserved communities behind. Many Oregonians lack access to affordable, reliable, fast internet, digital skills training, computing devices, and technical support. In the wake of the global pandemic, many essential services shifted online to reduce the spread of the virus. That shift created more challenges for communities that either lack or have inadequate broadband access. Inadequate broadband access creates barriers to accessing critical services such as health care via telehealth visits, working remotely, participating in distance learning, and engaging civically. This makes internet access and digital skills even more essential as the trend to move more services online accelerates.

This bill is a product of a broadband workgroup led by Representative Marsh that included a broad set of stakeholders, including representatives from the Oregon Broadband Office, front-line community leaders, and public and private sector representatives. HB3201 aims to align Oregon statute with federal law by eliminating unnecessary restrictions on the Broadband Fund by:

- Ensuring the Broadband Fund can keep up with technological changes by creating a new process for setting speed standards through the engagement of the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council and diverse stakeholders.

- HB3201 updates how broadband funds are spent by continuing to prioritize unserved areas in Oregon while Increasing flexibility to allow the Oregon Broadband Office to tailor programs to unserved and underserved areas in the State.
- The bill also removes the “right of first refusal,” a provision currently established under SB1603, that stifles new business development. This provision is unique to Oregon and unnecessary as we move into a connected future; we are at a time when we need to make it easier for all Oregonians to access fast, reliable, and affordable broadband and ensure we do not leave federal dollars on the table.
- HB3201 increases opportunity for new business development by removing barriers. Market competition is good for consumers because it increases provider choice and lowers monthly service costs. By removing codified regulation, HB3201 creates a business friendly environment that promotes workforce development and helps new Oregon businesses grow and flourish.
- Lastly, it addresses the need for a strong and fair challenge process for grant awards through an independent Judicial Review Process as outlined in the Oregon Administrative Procedures Act (APA).

HB3201 is a step in the right direction to ensure that Oregon is poised to receive more than \$700 million in federal dollars to invest in building services across our state. These unprecedented capital investments are a never-before-seen opportunity to help further close Oregon’s digital divide.

We encourage your support for HB3201.

Thank you,



Carmen Rubio  
Commissioner, City of Portland