



March 7, 2023

Chair Janelle Bynum
House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for HB 3201

Dear Chair Bynum and Committee Members,

I am writing to express LightSpeed Networks, Inc.'s (LS Networks) support for HB 3201. Access to reliable high-speed internet is a key contributor to economic development in underserved and unserved communities. We believe this bill eliminates unnecessary restrictions on funding accessibility and is key to expanding access to Oregon communities.

At LS Networks, our mission is to provide rural and underserved communities in the Pacific Northwest fast, reliable internet from a trusted local provider. This creates consumer choice and advances quality of life. We were founded in 2005 by six rural electric cooperatives and one Native American tribe with the specific goal of executing on this mission. Since then, we have grown to serve 126 different communities throughout Oregon and Washington and currently operate a 7,000 mile network connecting schools, hospitals, cell towers, government services, and others in areas that have limited options for fiber-based internet and communication services including: Dufur, Vale, Lakeview, Christmas Valley and Brookings. Our work focuses on bringing digital equity to underserved areas around the state. We believe that HB 3201's flexible definition of broadband and its objective approach to funding applicants brings the Oregon statute into alignment with federal rules, guidance and best practices, while eliminating unnecessary restrictions on the Oregon Broadband Fund.

HB 3201's establishment of an "unserved" and "underserved" definition properly provides a method to adjust minimum speed criteria for a given area. Providing a flexible avenue to recognize advances in both technology and bandwidth demand allows the Oregon Broadband Fund to maximize its ability to benefit Oregonians faced with insufficient or non-existent internet services. The effect of this definition further serves to expand the scope of providers that may apply for funds and serve Oregon communities.

By establishing a non-discriminatory selection process, HB 3201 ensures that any provider interested in serving an area with fast, reliable services is afforded equal consideration for funds. Allowing an exclusivity option or right of first refusal to create preferential treatment for incumbent providers defeats the spirit of the laws passed by Congress that provide Oregon's access to additional broadband funding.



Further, we believe it is in the state's best interest to align its funding programs with the guidelines of federal programs to ensure the state receives the maximum federal contribution, thus enabling the greatest number of Oregonians to realize the resulting benefit. Regardless of the equitable access and public benefit considerations concerning HB 3201, the administrative reality is that the state will almost certainly be subjected to additional scrutiny from the US Department of Treasury if HB 3201 as written is not passed. Federal to State directed funds require that recipients make necessary investments that support long-term growth, opportunity and equity. Allowing specific accommodations for incumbent for-profit providers runs contrary to federal guidance and the goals of supporting equity in business dealings and access to services for community members.

In summary, LS Networks supports HB 3201. The flexible definition of broadband and objective approach to evaluate funding applicants brings the Oregon statute into alignment with federal rules and guidelines while eliminating unnecessary restrictions on the Oregon Broadband Fund, and advances the Oregon Broadband Office's mission to close Oregon's digital divide.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randall Brogle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randall Brogle
CEO, LS Networks