

Submitter: Tracey Larvenz

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal
and World Affairs

Measure: HB3201

I'd like to offer up my support for HB3201-A. I live and work in the rural fringes of Multnomah County. My wife and I are remote workers, and reliable high-speed internet access is not a luxury but rather a necessity. We both work in the tech industry, and having a baseline availability of high-speed Internet is expected, as is the case for anyone else working remotely.

According to the FCC National Broadband Map, we had eight different high-speed providers available to us. This seemed odd, as several of the providers listed could not actually provide service to us in any capacity, let alone broadband. This highlighted a few fundamental flaws with the way this data was collected and the dispute resolution process:

Companies were not required to provide proof that they could service an address but rather that they at least had a customer receiving broadband within a given area. This created a situation where the FCC believes that service is widely available in an area when the truth is that they may only be servicing a few out of the thousands of residents in the area.

On the consumer side, residents cannot simply say they cannot get service. They are required to go through a lengthy, days- or weeks-long process to get the companies to reluctantly admit that they can not/will not provide service to a household. This often requires some combination of calls, emails, and physical mail to accomplish. And this is required for each company that the consumer has erroneously listed as a service provider. In my case, this was four providers, and it took me about three weeks to get the feedback needed to dispute the company's claims.

Worse, each individual resident is required to go through this process, placing the burden of proof not on the company claiming to provide service but rather on the resident to prove that the company isn't able to do so. In other words, they're requiring thousands of households to go through the work of providing the proof rather than requiring the handful of companies to prove that they do offer the service. The result of this is that the FCC has a flawed dataset that skews in favor of the broadband providers rather than the residents.

My heart goes out to people in remote areas. I'm only a half hour outside of downtown Portland and my access to high-speed Internet is highly unreliable, incredibly expensive (about \$500/mo for a patchwork of providers whom I switch between to maintain a usable connection throughout the day), dependent upon the weather, and difficult to have installed (I was on a waitlist for Starlink for over a year, it took ViaSat 5 service calls to actually install the connection, cellular-based Internet is mostly unavailable for the largest part of the day and is slow when we can find

signal). I can only imagine the frustration for people who are further out than we are.

Broadband is now a utility and should be treated as such. People require broadband for their communications, education, jobs, commerce, and entertainment. That there are areas without reasonably priced access shows a lack of understanding the residents' needs and how their personal lives and jobs require access to this resource.

Oregonians will not have access to high-quality remote jobs and the taxes they provide without the state's support to ensure the availability of affordable broadband within its borders. People will be forced to move if we cannot find a sensible way forward in this endeavor.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Tracey Larvenz