



State Senator Chris Gorsek  
District 25  
900 Court Street, S403, Salem OR 97301

May 2, 2023

Senator James Manning Jr., Chair  
Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, Emergency Management, Federal and World  
Affairs

**Re: Support for HB 3201-A**

Dear Chair Manning,

I urge your support of HB 3201-A, and any amendments that further align Oregon's broadband laws with federal guidance in order to maximize broadband funding for Oregon.

Fast, reliable, and affordable internet connectivity is essential. Yet even in East Multnomah County there are gaps in high-speed infrastructure. In 2020, Multnomah County and the cities of Gresham, Fairview, Troutdale, Wood Village, and Portland sponsored a study of this issue in our communities. Looking at Census block-level data, the study revealed areas in East Multnomah County with no service at all. In fall 2022, the Federal Communications Commission's first draft of the National Broadband Map, while imperfect, revealed the need at a location-by-location level of detail. It suggests twice as much need for broadband investments in East Multnomah County than previously identified. Beyond this, where infrastructure exists, our historically marginalized communities have a sincere need for affordable service options. According to the latest Census figures, 22% of East County residents are without home broadband.

The good news: Historic levels of federal funding, from multiple sources, will soon be available to address this. The challenge? Existing statute threatens Oregon's ability to effectively and efficiently leverage these resources to increase broadband availability and achieve digital equity.

HB 3201-A offers a solution by creating a flexible, forward-thinking framework for public investments in broadband and digital equity. As amended, the bill:

- Eliminates outdated technology standards from statute, creating alignment with federal funding sources in the short-term. It empowers technology experts on the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council to guide the state in keeping up with constant changes in technology in the long-term.



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- Establishes a framework for a transparent and accountable public process, while also ensuring a competitive process by removing the “right of first refusal.”
- Is responsive to the needs of our unserved and underserved communities.

The forthcoming -10 amendment:

- Represents a compromise between all interested parties.
- Focuses the data used to make funding decisions at a more detailed level, allowing for a strategic use of funds.
- Is consistent with federal expectations, based on the draft challenge process guidance released by NTIA on April 25, 2023, thereby ensuring that challenges to potential grant applications are identified and addressed early on.

I urge your support for HB 3021-A, which allows us to make the most of this historic moment.

Sincerely,