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12/10/20

Attn: John Holman
United States Department of Agriculture
1220 SW 3rd Ave. Suite 1801
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mr. Holman,

I write to you today in support of Lewis County Public Utility District's (PUD) broadband construction proposal to provide broadband access to currently underserved and unserved customers from Chehalis to Adna, and down through the Boistfort Valley. The PUD will be constructing this infrastructure as a fiber-to-the-premises, open access network. The proposal will serve up to 340 residential and commercial customers under this grant award and provide a backbone with the capacity to serve in excess of 3,000 more in subsequent phases.

In the spring of 2020, the PUD conducted a county-wide broadband survey that evaluated customers' current and desired broadband access, as well as identified current Internet speeds to determine which customers and communities are served and/or not served to the current state broadband definition of 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload. These survey results revealed that many areas within the PUD's service territory do not meet the state's broadband definition; the proposed project is one such area that has been verified as broadband underserved.

Broadband service in this proposed area will translate into many critical quality-of-life benefits to the community including, but not limited to: improved community safety and emergency response, enhancement of commerce, increase in job opportunities, better access to critical telehealth services, access to digital learning modalities for students of all ages, expanded capability for working adults to flexibly work from/near home. In short, it will give all served residents and businesses access to all the information and utilities which broadband provides.

I appreciate your consideration of the PUD's proposal, and strongly urge your support. I ask that you please keep me informed when you award USDA's Community Connect grant. Please direct the information to Rachel Katz at Rachel.Katz@mail.house.gov or via telephone at (360) 695-6292.

Sincerely,

Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress