

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

May 14, 2022

10:02 a.m.

10:02:20 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Bishop called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Click Bishop, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Natasha von Imhof
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Donny Olson

ALSO PRESENT

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Sponsor; Amory Lelake, Staff to Representative Edgmon; Nils Andreassen, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Christine O'Conner, Executive Director, Alaska Telecom Association; Lesil McGuire, OneWeb, Anchorage; Mark Springer, Self, Bethel; Paul Johnson, Self, Anchorage; Brittany Woods, Alaska Public Interest Research Group, Fairbanks; Harold Johnson, Self, Anchorage; Michael Williams, Self, Akiak; Sean Williams, Self, Anchorage.

SUMMARY

CSHB 19(EDC)

LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

CSHB 19(EDC) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 114 EDUCATION & SUPPLEMENTAL LOAN PROGRAMS

HB 114 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 127 MUNI BOND BANK: UA, LOAN AND BOND LIMITS

HB 127 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSHB 172(FIN) am
MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES & MEDS

CSHB 172(FIN) am was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSHB 265(FIN)
HEALTH CARE SERVICES BY TELEHEALTH

CSHB 265(FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSHB 363(FIN)
BROADBAND: OFFICE, GRANTS, PARITY

CSHB 363(FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#hb363

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 363(FIN)

"An Act establishing the office of broadband; creating the broadband parity adjustment fund; establishing the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board; and providing for an effective date."

[10:03:31 AM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop relayed that it was the first hearing for CSHB 363 (FIN). It was the committee's intention to hear a bill introduction and sectional analysis, take invited and public testimony, and set the bill aside.

[10:04:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON, SPONSOR, gave a high-level overview of HB 363. He commented that putting high-quality,

affordable, reliable broadband into every possible corner of the state was a transformative opportunity. The legislation would provide the framework to put the Office of Broadband into place as a mechanism to receive federal funds that would come to the state. The bill would set up a process that would involve a lot of stakeholder engagement, partnerships, and working relationships necessary to bring about the changes.

Representative Edgmon detailed that the original bill that he introduced was taken from the governor's Broadband Task Force, which had been commissioned in May of the previous year and had finished its work in November 2021. The task force had come forward with a set of recommendations, from which the sponsor drew from exclusively when the bill was drafted in February 2022. He stated he had taken no creative license and the bill had been slightly amended in two committees in the House. He thought the task force had focused on mirroring federal law with broadband language, which was very prescriptive. He noted that the bill that emerged from the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee had tried to achieve similar goals to the bill as originally introduced but went in a different direction in a number of ways that his staff would address in their testimony. He discussed the process of changes to the bill in the previous committee.

[10:07:45 AM](#)

AMORY LELAKE, STAFF TO REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON, discussed a Sectional Analysis (copy on file). She explained that Section 1 of the bill created a new uncodified section providing legislative findings, purpose, and intent. The section had detailed information on the state's broadband program. The section also established that the grant and loan programs referenced in Section 2 were meant to extend broadband infrastructure into unserved and underserved areas, and that such programs would provide support to private entities only under the assurance that assets and infrastructure funded by grants and loans would be developed and maintained for public use for at least 15 years.

Ms. Lelake continued that in the codified sections of the bill, Section 2 added new sections. She cited that AS 44.33.910 established the Office of Broadband in the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

The office would be an essential planning body for broadband in the state, and the section detailed the office's purpose, powers, and duties, including implementation of a statewide plan.

Ms. Lelake detailed that the bill proposed that the Office of Broadband may also assist applicants for the grant and loan program established by the bill, as they sought other funding opportunities. The office may also accept donations and seek out funding opportunities for which it was eligible. She listed that AS 44.33.915 established a Broadband Grant and Loan program. The Office of Broadband would work with the statewide Broadband Advisory Board established by the bill, to review applications and provide support to applicants for planning and construction of broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas.

Ms. Lelake continued that AS 44.33.920 created a Broadband Advisory Board, which would work with community engagement task forces also established by the legislation and would examine challenges and opportunities relating to regional connectivity. The board would be composed of eight members appointed by the governor for three-year terms. Members would have experience in telecommunications, various engineering disciplines and broadband technologies. One of the members would serve as the technology-neutral consultant, which would be entitled to a monthly salary at range 27. All other advisory board members would receive compensation of \$307 per day while attending board meetings, as well as authorized travel and per diem expenses.

Ms. Lelake cited that Section 44.33.930 created Community Engagement Task Forces. The number of task forces was not established in the bill, and the director of the Office of Broadband would appoint state residents to serve on the task forces. The groups would include members who represent tribes, health care providers, search and rescue organizations, social service providers, the transportation industry, and regional development organizations. The task forces would also include state and local public government officials and tribal or state government employees with access to judicial records. The task force members would receive compensation of \$307 per day while attending task force meetings, as well as authorized travel and per diem expenses. Section 44.33.930 was definitions, Section 3

sunset the bill on June 30, 2030, and Section 4 established an immediate effective date.

[10:11:21 AM](#)

Senator von Imhof asked if there was a difference between the bill that left the House and the bill that passed out of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee with regard to parity. She thought parity was an issue that people had been focusing on, and she thought the original bill had addressed the issue.

Representative Edgmon stated that the original bill had parity adjustment, which had been a recommendation of the governor's Broadband Task Force, and the CS being considered by the committee did not. He noted that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) had \$65 billion set aside for broadband, with the funds separated into different buckets. He thought one bucket addressed the affordability of reliable and high-speed broadband. He thought members of the Broadband Task Force members would testify on the subject. He thought the task force was cognizant about setting up a fund that would not only be a repository and pass-through location for federal funds, but also considered funds that might be available for equalizing the cost of broadband.

Representative Edgmon discussed the expense of broadband, which increased the further the location was from the internet source. He thought the parity or equalization would come into play after other work was done to do mapping, planning, relationship building, and determining the unserved and underserved parts of the state.

Representative Edgmon continued to address Senator von Imhof's question. He reminded that the program was also new in the federal government. He clarified that the new version of the bill did not address the parity adjustment fund.

[10:13:50 AM](#)

Senator von Imhof thought Representative Edgmon gave a good example. She had been to a couple of meetings with the Broadband Task Force and staff from DCCED, who had discussed work that had been done in the previous years. She thought that the bill that left the House had followed

the IJJA parameters very closely, including parity and the tremendous work the Broadband Task Force had done. She wanted to ensure it was on the record that the version that left the House was the result of significant work by the task force, and followed the most recent set of guidelines from IJJA.

Representative Edgmon affirmed that Senator von Imhof's statements were accurate. He reminded that the deadline for personal legislation was February 18, and there had been a short amount of time to put the bill together. He noted that the task force came before the House Finance Committee on February 1, after which it had seemed integral that the legislature should be involved in putting forward parameters for the task force groups and any fund that might be created. He commented that there was no section of law that addressed the subject, and the bill was drawn exclusively from the task force.

[10:16:11 AM](#)

Senator Hoffman mentioned that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) was reviewing \$6 billion worth of requests in an area that only had \$1 billion. He asked how the sponsor would address unserved and underserved areas, and thought the topic was being discussed at the national level in order to have criteria for awarding the limited funds that were available. He wondered how the sponsor saw the task force addressing the issue and interfacing with the funds and all of the proposals that could overlap. He wondered how underserved and unserved areas were defined in the state.

Representative Edgmon thought Senator Hoffman had touched on an important point, with reference to how the mapping would occur to delineate undeserved and underserved areas. He detailed that there were technical definitions that were written into the original bill as well as the federal act. He mentioned that one the first steps the Office of Broadband would take would be to work in concert with the FCC and other entities (such as telecom providers that had done some mapping) to put together a comprehensive detailed map of the state to pinpoint the different internet service levels. He qualified that the thrust of the broadband program in federal law was to address areas in a priority ranking, starting with those at the lowest levels of

service or no internet at all. He mentioned areas of the state that experienced spotty internet connection.

10:18:50 AM

Senator Hoffman thought it would be a daunting task to get internet in the first place, and thought the larger question was how individual households would be able to afford the internet on a long-term basis. He recognized that many areas in the state were struggling with the high cost of energy and food. He questioned how certain people would be able to afford broadband internet if access was accomplished.

Representative Edgmon thought Senator Hoffman made an excellent point, which dovetailed with Senator von Imhof's point about the parity adjustment fund. He reiterated that the bill was drawn up using the task force recommendations, which had been as technology neutral as possible. The House Finance Committee had added an additional reference to technology neutral, because there were some areas that would not be able to receive fiber optic cable immediately or possibly ever. He described other technologies such as satellites and microwave transmission, which he thought should be deployed as well. He affirmed that cost would be an issue. He thought that it was apparent from reading the federal language that United States Senator Lisa Murkowski and others had written a lot of the language with Alaska in mind. He asserted that funding should not be the primary impediment and mentioned other issues that could slow down the delivery of good internet at affordable rates.

Senator von Imhof referenced a section in the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee version of the bill that iterated "such programs would provide support to private entities." She thought it odd that the language was so prescriptive and wondered about non-profits and public entities. She asked if the House version of the bill had something that specifically stated that grant and loan programs would only be given to private entities, or if the version of the bill was more open-ended.

Representative Edgmon acknowledged that he was not involved in the drafting of the Labor and Commerce Committee version of the bill. He reiterated that the House version followed the Broadband Task Force's recommendations, and he tried to make it the least prescriptive as possible. He reminded

that there would be three different federal agencies that would be involved and working with compliance issues. He thought the original version of the bill was less prescriptive and more open-ended.

[10:22:40 AM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop commented that whatever happened to the bill, he could almost guarantee the bill would be added to the following year since the federal government was still writing guidance and things would evolve.

Senator von Imhof asked if it was necessary to have it in statute to require communities to create local task forces. She asked if communities could organically and independently establish task forces as they wished, in order to apply for grants and attract the task force and technical advisory group to visit the area and make a plan. She wondered if people were incentivized to do so because of the opportunity.

Representative Edgmon thought Co-Chair Bishop had "hit the nail on the head," and that the bill would be an iterative process. He commented on the new section of law and unanticipated developments that would come forward. He explained that the bill had left open-ended enough so that the Office of Broadband or technical group could come up with a relationship with local regional areas. He emphasized the need for engagement with local entities during the mapping process. He mentioned anchor institutions like health clinics, schools, hospitals, and others. He thought the mapping would need to involve many parties and be similar to acquiring census data. He thought a regional area would be well-served to be involved. He noted that the original bill did not preclude what Senator von Imhof mentioned from happening.

Co-Chair Bishop emphasized that redundancy was important, whether via a satellite or landline.

[10:26:43 AM](#)

NILS ANDREASSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE, shared that he had been a member of the governor's Broadband Task Force. He explained that he would speak to two aspects of the task force work that he thought were very important. He mentioned the advisory board recommended

by the task force, which was there to set the vision and goals for the Office of Broadband. He understood that at an agency level, staff would be fulfilling obligations under statute under federal guidelines, while an advisory board would be in place to consider the economic, social, community, cultural, environmental, and other considerations across the state that would inform statewide planning efforts.

Mr. Andreassen thought the advisory board activities would be very different than a grant review committee or a technical committee, for which the department could work closely with technical consultants and others. He summarized the importance of having a separate body to set visions and goals in a way that was meaningful, that could drive the work of the Office of Broadband. He thought the idea was accomplished within the task force's efforts, which was reflected in the version of the bill that passed the House.

Mr. Andreassen added that the version of the bill that had passed the House was broad enough to incorporate a lot of what might be coming from the federal government, setting the stage for opportunity without being prescriptive. He thought the Parity Adjustment Fund was an important element that came from the task force. He emphasized that every Broadband Task Force report had included something like a subsidy to help with broadband and communications. He listed laudable aspects of the version of the bill that passed the House: it did not commit to resourcing the fund, it did not produce a methodology, and it did not have numbers in it. He emphasized that it was not possible to know what the numbers would be.

Mr. Andreassen continued to discuss the original version of the bill, which he thought set up the state to be prepared for what might come from the federal government to lower broadband costs. He noted that the parity adjustment was not long-term and reasoned that the work would take time before underserved and unserved communities were served. He discussed the use of a parity fund and mentioned the possibility of a sunset date or timeline. He thought the parity adjustment would not be long term. He emphasized the need for having everything in place at a state level for planning, deployment, and support in relation to the federal government and the state's priorities to implement broadband effectively.

10:31:12 AM

Co-Chair Bishop asked Mr. Andreassen to provide any written testimony to his office to pass on to members.

Senator Wielechowski was curious to hear about Mr. Andreassen's specific concerns with the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee's version of the bill.

Mr. Andreassen offered to follow up in writing. He noted that the two items he mentioned were very different or not present in the CS, which were a different composition of the statewide Broadband Advisory Board and the lack of the Parity Adjustment Fund.

10:32:19 AM

CHRISTINE O'CONNOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA TELECOM ASSOCIATION (via teleconference), spoke in support of the House version of the bill. She noted that the bill was created in alignment with the Broadband Task Force, and also aligned with IIJA. She detailed that recently the notice of funding opportunity (including the rules for the large amount of broadband funding) was released. She relayed that an initial look over the rules showed that the House version of bill was aligned. She underscored that the House version of the bill created a strong Office of Broadband that would have the assistance and support of a multi-stakeholder board. She stressed that IIJA came with requirements for extensive stakeholder engagement. She emphasized the importance of the multi-stakeholder board in implementing the priorities of the task force.

Ms. O'Connor asserted that the House version of the bill had strong priorities, such as to serve all unserved areas without 25-megabit service. She mentioned the importance of provision in the House version of the bill that grant funding would be open to all interested parties including non-profits, tribes, other native organizations, or anyone interested to deploy and provide broadband service. She explained that the Alaska Telecomm Association represented 15 telecommunication companies and broadband providers which unanimously supported the bill. She thought the bill was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Senator Wielechowski asked if Ms. O'Connor would oppose the Senate version of the bill.

Ms. O'Connor shared that ATA had significant concerns with the Senate version of the bill. Specifically, she listed that the new proposed structure of the board as being not suited to the consultation obligations. She mentioned references to dated federal planning and policy that was not tied directly to the new federal law with IIJA.

Co-Chair Bishop thought he heard Ms. O'Connor comment that the House version mirrored the most recent guidance issued from the federal office of NTIA, as recently as a day previously.

Ms. O'Connor relayed that the notice of funding opportunity from NTIA, the administrator for the vast majority of the broadband funds, had released their rules the previous day. The rules equaled about 98 pages in length. In her initial read, the rules aligned very well with the House version of the bill.

[10:36:59 AM](#)

Senator Wielechowski was trying to understand the difference with the Parity Adjustment Board and its importance versus what was put into the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee's version of the bill.

Ms. O'Connor explained that the House version of the bill's statewide Broadband Advisory Board was based on the Broadband Task Force's recommendation and was a group of stakeholders representing user groups. She listed education, healthcare, and commerce as a description of user groups. The Senate version listed engineers and technical experts rather than stakeholders she thought of as "uber users" of broadband technology. She continued that the House version of the bill had the advisory board with user groups, but also adopted a technical subgroup to advise the Broadband Advisory Board on the important technical issues but would not be tasked with doing broad engagement.

Senator Wielechowski clarified that his question was with regard to the Parity Adjustment Board. He interpreted that there was a replacement of the Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund with the Broadband Grant and Loan Program.

Ms. O'Connor affirmed that in the House version, there was a Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund, which allowed for the establishment of a fund to support the offset to consumer costs if there were funds identified. There was no board directly tasked with the Broadband Parity Adjustment. In the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee version of the bill there was no Broadband Parity Adjustment.

Senator Wielechowski wanted greater understanding regarding parity adjustment. He wondered who parity adjustment helped. He noted that he represented low-income Alaskans in East Anchorage, and he wanted to know which bill version would help his constituents to get low-cost internet.

Ms. O'Connor emphasized that the House version of the bill would allow for what Senator Wielechowski described. She continued that the broadband parity adjustment was modelled after a federal program called the Lifeline Program, as well as after a program in IJJA called the Affordable Connectivity Program. The program simply meant that if a consumer had income at or lower than 200 percent of the poverty level, they would qualify for a credit on their broadband bill. She cited that under the Affordable Connectivity Program there was a \$75 credit.

Senator von Imhof thought one of the differences was on page 4, line 15, "the Broadband Grant and Loan Program is a competitive grant and loan program to award funding to eligible applicants to award funding to eligible applicants to promote access to broadband." She thought the language indicated that Senator Wielechowski's constituents would be competing against other constituents, and perhaps whoever had the best application would receive the funds. She thought a competitive grant program came down to whomever could write the best grant.

Ms. O'Connor stated that the way the House version was structured allowed for the parity adjustment, which was not competitive but based on low-income qualification. The bill also allowed for a grant program for deployment activities, which would reach unserved locations. She noted that the grant program was required for federal funding. The House version of the bill had both, while the Senate version dropped the broadband parity adjustment opportunity.

[10:41:56 AM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop OPENED public testimony.

10:42:10 AM

LESIL MCGUIRE, ONEWEB, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. She noted that she was a lifelong Alaskan that had served the state alongside many of the members in the room. She thought the sponsor should be commended. She emphasized that Alaska was the least connected state in the nation for a variety of reasons, including lack of competition, new providers, and acceptance of new technologies. She thought the bill should be a combination of the two versions that had been discussed. She agreed with Co-Chair Bishop's comment that there would be change associated with further emerging IJJA regulations. She lauded the findings section in the Senate version of the bill.

Ms. McGuire continued her testimony. She thought the board process outlined in the House version of the bill was problematic. She stated that her organization was in the emerging technology area of broadband and were doing work outside the mainstream of the industry. She mentioned OneWeb's work with satellites. She explained that broadband members were not allowed to be part of the Alaska Telecom Association (ATA). She emphasized that OneWeb served the unserved and underserved. She advocated adopting a version of the bill with either no industry representative, or two industry representatives. She thought the Senate version had a creative way of involving community members. She summarized that she hoped for the creation of an advisory board that was more inclusive.

10:45:41 AM

AT EASE

10:47:20 AM

RECONVENED

MARK SPRINGER, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. He was a consultant for tribal broadband, working with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Tribal Broadband Consortium (YKDTBC) which consisted of 17 federally recognized tribes. He expanded that YKDTBC had an application with NTIA for a multi-purpose broadband system and were currently testing OneWeb in Bethel and Akiak. He

mentioned a tribal recognition bill recently voted on by the legislature. He thought it was important that the committee recognize that the first funding coming in from NTIA for broadband in Alaska would be directed towards tribes. He supported Version D of the bill by the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee.

Mr. Springer expressed concerns about the parity adjustment, which he thought could be looked at as an industry subsidy. He thought there was no evidence in rural Alaska that subsidies reduced cost. He echoed the comments of Ms. McGuire regarding less-than-equal representation by industry segments in the planning process within the House version of the bill. He commented that he had lived in rural Alaska for over 40 years. He supported the Senate version of the bill, which he thought created somewhat of a "brain trust," with the inclusion of engineers and local advisory groups. He reminded that the Broadband Office would be developing a set of regulations to run the process. He thought the office should be trusted with its regulatory responsibility.

[10:50:07 AM](#)

PAUL JOHNSON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill. He worked in telecom. He had grown up in rural Alaska and worked in Yakutat doing broadband consultation. He wanted to commend the governor on his task force membership selection. He thought the previous commenter was correct in that the first funding coming for broadband would be for tribes. He thought it was important to keep people in rural Alaska in mind. He expressed concern about public money being used to build the assets of privately held companies that could be sold.

Mr. Johnson continued his remarks. He understood the demand for fiber-optic technology. He remarked on the importance of timing and permitting issues in capital projects. He wanted there to be a focus on immediacy and using tribes as a conduit. He discussed parity adjustment and was concerned that there would be no economic forces to contain costs if fiber-optic cable was used as the final mile to homes. He asserted that there would not be multiple fiber-optic operators going to a community. He supported provisions related to community engagement.

[10:52:48 AM](#)

HAROLD JOHNSON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported the bill. He was president of Alaska Tribal Broadband, which was a 30 tribal member consortium. He cited that 29 of the tribes did not have access to fiber optic technology and would not for many years, and the tribes were using satellite via OneWeb. He stated that the tribes were putting in fixed wireless networks, which could be interfaced with fiber when it arrived. He supported the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee's version of the bill. He thought the bill version alleviated many concerns. He thought it was untrue that the tribes could not put in telephone networks. He mentioned lobbying from the telecom industry and suggested that the telecom industry did not want competition. He echoed the comments of the previous testifier. He stressed that there were opportunities for telecom companies to work with tribes. He shared that he was attending a conference with a newly formed tribal telecom council. He wanted tribes to have a voice.

[10:55:03 AM](#)

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, SELF, AKIAK (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. He worked with the Yukon Kuskokwim Tribal Broadband Consortium. He relayed that there was OneWeb service to Akiak. He noted that there were 17 tribes looking to NTIA grants to make sure the tribes were connected. He relayed that there were plans for fiber optic cable in the future. He cited that 98 homes in Akiak were connected, and there was a lot of difference in the community. He echoed the comments of Ms. McGuire and Mr. Springer that were advocating for providers to be represented equally.

Mr. Williams continued his testimony. He wanted to promote competition by allowing all technologies and broadband providers access to funds. He did not support deprioritizing tribes. He emphasized compensating technical experts for their time. He supported the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee's version of the bill.

[10:57:16 AM](#)

BRITTANY WOODS, ALASKA PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Senate CS. She thought the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee's version of the bill improved community

engagement, promoted competition, and supported tribes owning their own network.

Co-Chair Bishop asked Ms. Woods to provide any additional testimony in writing.

[10:58:15 AM](#)

AT EASE

[10:58:23 AM](#)

RECONVENED

SEAN WILLIAMS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee CS. He was Vice President of Government Affairs and Strategy at Pacific Dataport. He noted that Pacific Dataport launched two satellites over Anchorage to provide connections for 110,000 rural Alaskans with broadband. He clarified that the ATA did not represent internet service providers, middle-mile providers, or satellite providers. It had not participated in the writing the original version of the bill. He supported the Senate CS for the bill, which had several important changes. He asserted that the proposed parity fund was nonsensical. He listed the term "in state" which would require the use of incumbent telecoms to get funding.

Mr. Williams asserted that the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee's CS did not deprioritize tribes in the award process, it compensated technical experts for their time, promoted competition, and was perfectly in line with IIJA rules. He discussed the proposed parity fund and reasoned that the fund would need to be started with \$168 billion to achieve true parity.

Co-Chair Bishop asked Mr. Williams to provide additional testimony in writing.

[11:01:37 AM](#)

AT EASE

[11:02:28 AM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Bishop CLOSED public testimony.

Senator von Imhof referenced public testimony and discussed the version of the bill that passed the House in contrast with the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee version. She thought public testimony had indicated the membership of the advisory board was one of the differences between the versions. She listed members from stakeholder groups. The House version of the bill iterated that the Broadband Advisory Board shall establish a Broadband Technical Working Group to provide technical recommendations to the advisory board. She thought the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee's version appeared to propose that the advisory board itself was the technical working group. She listed technical experts that would be part of the technical working group, including engineers and experts in fiber optics, telecommunications, and satellite and microwave technology. She asked if the House version had more geographical and stakeholder representation, versus the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee version that had more technical representation. She wondered how to blend the two groups to have a balance.

Ms. O'Connor thought Senator von Imhof had described the differences in the two board structures proposed in the two bills. She continued that in the House version of the bill, the two concepts were already blended. She commented that the categories of those listed for membership on the advisory board were high level positions in commerce, education, healthcare, and other categories. She thought the stakeholders would bring vision and guidance on policy. She noted that the task force had developed a similar broad stakeholder group with the addition of technical expertise. She believed the House version melded the concepts by having a stakeholder group provide vision with the support of technical expertise in the working group.

[11:05:44 AM](#)

Senator von Imhof noted that the House version of the bill mentioned a "technical working group who collectively had expertise in different technologies." She wondered about using language from the Senate CS to provide a more detailed description of membership. She thought there was concern about different industries in the state making sure they have a seat at the table. She thought there seemed to be specific reference to compensation in the Senate CS. She referenced public testimony that supported paying technical experts and noted that the House version of the bill had

proposed that members of the advisory board were not entitled to compensation.

Ms. O'Connor thought it would be simple to define some of the various technical experts. She pointed out that all of the telecom providers in the state were broadband providers, and they used all the varying technologies. She addressed Senator von Imhof's question regarding compensation. She thought the House version of the bill appeared to model what the task force had accomplished, which was done without compensation. She remarked on the diverse representation on the task force and noted there were extensive hearings in which many of the current testifiers offered remarks. She pointed out that the task force meetings were open to anyone that wanted to present, and every meeting was public. The task force was able to accomplish a strong report based on a volunteer effort of the stakeholders, which she thought was a valuable way to move forward. She thought the legislature should weigh in about compensation.

Co-Chair Bishop observed that there were many engineers listed to be on the board as proposed in the Senate version of the bill but did not observe any clients. He recounted that many school districts had visited during the legislative session and commented on the price of internet connectivity. He thought there was more work to be done on the bill. He thought a non-engineer, either rural or urban, needed to be included.

Co-Chair Bishop set the bill aside.

Co-Chair Bishop CLOSED public testimony.

[11:10:32 AM](#)

AT EASE

[11:10:52 AM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Bishop relayed that the amendment deadline was the following day at noon.

CSHB 363(FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

11:11:07 AM
RECESSED

[The meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m.]

ADJOURNMENT
4:42:07 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m.