

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4374

To bolster certain rural broadband programs of the Department of
Agriculture.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 9, 2021

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To bolster certain rural broadband programs of the
Department of Agriculture.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Broadband Internet
5 Connections for Rural America Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. INNOVATIVE BROADBAND ADVANCEMENT PRO-**
2 **GRAM.**

3 Section 603(e) of the Rural Electrification Act of
4 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb–2(e)) is amended to read as fol-
5 lows:

6 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
8 appropriated to the Secretary \$300,000,000 for each
9 of fiscal years 2022 through 2030, to remain avail-
10 able until expended, to carry out projects in accord-
11 ance with this section—

12 “(A) in the case of fiscal year 2022, in 15
13 States, including Maine, Pennsylvania, Virginia,
14 California, Georgia, Texas, Florida, Minnesota,
15 South Carolina, Wyoming, Iowa, and West Vir-
16 ginia; and

17 “(B) in the case of each of fiscal years
18 2023 through 2030, in States selected by the
19 Secretary to be diverse on the basis of geog-
20 raphy, topography, and demographics.

21 “(2) LIMITATION.—Not more than \$25,000,000
22 of the amounts made available under paragraph (1)
23 for each fiscal year may be provided for a single
24 project.”.

1 **SEC. 3. RURAL BROADBAND PROGRAM LOANS AND**
2 **GRANTS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 601 of the Rural Elec-
4 trification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb) is amended—

5 (1) in the section heading, by striking “**AC-**
6 **CESS TO BROADBAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**
7 **SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS**” and inserting “**RE-**
8 **CONNECT RURAL BROADBAND PROGRAM**”;

9 (2) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the
10 following:

11 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSE.—The Secretary
12 shall establish a program, which shall be known as the
13 ‘ReConnect Rural Broadband Program’, to provide grants,
14 loans, and loan guarantees to finance the costs of the con-
15 struction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and
16 equipment for broadband service in rural areas.”;

17 (3) in subsection (c)(2), by striking subpara-
18 graphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following:

19 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In making grants,
20 making loans, and guaranteeing loans under
21 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give the
22 highest priority to applications for projects to
23 provide broadband service to unserved rural
24 communities that do not have any residential
25 broadband service of at least—

1 “(i) a 10-Mbps downstream trans-
2 mission capacity; and

3 “(ii) a 1-Mbps upstream transmission
4 capacity.

5 “(B) OTHER.—After giving priority to the
6 applications described in clauses (i) and (ii) of
7 subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall then give
8 priority to applications for projects to provide
9 broadband service to rural communities—

10 “(i) with a population of less than
11 10,000 permanent residents; and

12 “(ii) with a high percentage of low in-
13 come families or persons (as defined in
14 section 501(b) of the Housing Act of 1949
15 (42 U.S.C. 1471(b)).

16 “(C) ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS.—In
17 making grants, making loans, and guaranteeing
18 loans under this subsection, the Secretary shall
19 consider whether an application was developed
20 with the participation of community stake-
21 holders, and will receive a substantial portion of
22 the funding for the project from community
23 stakeholders or other non-Federal sources.”;

24 (4) in subsection (c)(3)—

25 (A) in subparagraph (D)(i)—

1 (i) in subclause (I), by striking
2 “(2)(A)(i)” and inserting “(2)(A)”; and

3 (ii) in subclause (II), by striking “any
4 of subclauses (I) through (IV) of para-
5 graph (2)(B)(i)” and inserting “clause (i)
6 or (ii) of paragraph (2)(B)”; and

7 (B) by striking subparagraph (E) and in-
8 serting the following:

9 “(E) APPLICATIONS.—

10 “(i) GRANT-ONLY APPLICATIONS.—
11 The Secretary shall establish an applica-
12 tion process that permits an application for
13 a grant-only award.

14 “(ii) COMBINED APPLICATIONS.—The
15 Secretary shall establish an application
16 process that permits—

17 “(I) a single application for a
18 grant and a loan under title I or II,
19 or this title, that is associated with
20 the grant; and

21 “(II) provides a single decision to
22 award the grant and the loan.”;

23 (5) in subsection (d)(2)—

24 (A) in subparagraph (A)—

1 (i) by striking “subparagraphs (B)
2 and (C)” and inserting “subparagraph
3 (B)”;

4 (ii) by striking “—” and all that fol-
5 lows through “(i)”; and

6 (iii) by striking the semicolon and all
7 that follows through “providers”;

8 (B) in subparagraph (B), by striking
9 “(A)(i)” and inserting “(A)”; and

10 (C) by striking subparagraph (C);

11 (6) in subsection (d), by striking paragraph (5);

12 (7) in subsection (j)(1)—

13 (A) by striking “\$350,000,000” and in-
14 serting “\$5,250,000,000”;

15 (B) by striking “2019 through 2023” and
16 inserting “2022 through 2030”; and

17 (C) by striking “until expended” and in-
18 serting “for 2 fiscal years after the fiscal year
19 for which appropriated”; and

20 (8) in subsection (k), by striking “2023” and
21 inserting “2030”.

22 (b) SUNSET.—The authorities provided by section
23 779 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public
24 Law 115–141) shall have no force or effect after June
25 30, 2022.

1 (c) TRANSITION RULES.—

2 (1) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR ADMINISTRA-
3 TIVE COSTS.—Not more than 1 percent of the unob-
4 ligated balances of amounts made available as of
5 June 1, 2022, to carry out the pilot program de-
6 scribed in section 779 of the Consolidated Appro-
7 priations Act, 2018 (Public Law 115–141) may be
8 used for the costs of transitioning from the pilot
9 program to the program under section 601 of the
10 Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended by
11 this Act.

12 (2) CONSOLIDATION OF FUNDS.—

13 (A) IN GENERAL.—The unobligated bal-
14 ances of all amounts made available on or be-
15 fore June 30, 2023, to carry out the pilot pro-
16 gram described in section 779 of the Consoli-
17 dated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public Law
18 115–141) that are in excess of the amount de-
19 scribed in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph
20 are hereby transferred to and merged with
21 amounts made available to carry out the pro-
22 gram authorized under section 601 of the Rural
23 Electrification Act of 1936.

24 (B) UNFUNDED APPROVALS.—The amount
25 described in this subparagraph is the amount

1 required to fully fund each project approved as
2 of June 30, 2023, under the pilot program de-
3 scribed in such section 779 for which amounts
4 were not obligated or partially obligated as of
5 such date.

6 **SEC. 4. COMMUNITY CONNECT GRANTS.**

7 Section 604(g) of the Rural Electrification Act of
8 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb–3(g)) is amended by striking
9 “\$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023”
10 and inserting “\$150,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022
11 through 2030, to remain available for 2 fiscal years after
12 the fiscal year for which appropriated”.

13 **SEC. 5. DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE LOANS**
14 **AND GRANTS.**

15 Section 2335A of the Food Agriculture, Conserva-
16 tion, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 950aaa–5) is
17 amended by striking “\$82,000,000 for each of fiscal years
18 2019 through 2023” and inserting “\$150,000,000, to re-
19 main available for 2 fiscal years after the fiscal year for
20 which appropriated”.

21 **SEC. 6. EXPANSION OF MIDDLE MILE INFRASTRUCTURE**
22 **INTO RURAL AREAS.**

23 Section 602(g) of the Rural Electrification Act of
24 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb–1(g)) is amended by striking
25 “\$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2023”

1 and inserting “\$300,000,000 for each fiscal year, to re-
 2 main available for 2 fiscal years after the fiscal year for
 3 which appropriated”.

4 **SEC. 7. BROADBAND CONNECTORS PROGRAM.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall
 6 establish a system for the dissemination of information
 7 and technical assistance on the broadband programs of the
 8 Department of Agriculture, which shall be for the use of
 9 entities eligible to receive funds under title II or VI of
 10 the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 901 et
 11 seq.) or chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XXIII of the Food,
 12 Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7
 13 U.S.C. 950aaa et seq.).

14 (b) LIMITATIONS ON AUTHORIZATION OF APPRO-
 15 PRIATIONS.—To carry out subsection (a), there are au-
 16 thorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Agriculture
 17 not more than \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022
 18 through 2030, which are authorized to remain available
 19 through fiscal year 2030.

20 **SEC. 8. COMMUNITY BROADBAND MAPPING.**

21 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the
 22 “Community Broadband Mapping Act”.

23 (b) RURAL BROADBAND ACCESS GRANTS.—Section
 24 601 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C.
 25 950bb) is amended by adding at the end the following:

1 “(1) AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO CERTAIN EN-
2 TITIES TO COLLECT BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE
3 DATA.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
5 provision of this section, the Secretary may make a
6 grant under this section to a unit of local govern-
7 ment, a tribal government or a unit of tribal govern-
8 ment, an economic development or other community
9 organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in
10 section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells elec-
11 tric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone co-
12 operative, or an internet service provider that has
13 not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose
14 of enabling the collection of data relating to where
15 broadband infrastructure is located, cost of
16 broadband service, cost of such service by tier of
17 service, actual speed available at household, speed
18 advertised, and which homes are provided with non-
19 satellite broadband service, without regard to any
20 household service percentage requirement, and in de-
21 termining the eligibility of any such entity for such
22 a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is
23 not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a
24 population of 25,000 or more as determined by the
25 Bureau of the Census.

1 “(2) LIMITATION ON GRANT AMOUNT.—The
2 amount of a grant made under this subsection shall
3 not exceed \$50,000.

4 “(3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR
5 GRANTS.—The Secretary may use not more than 1
6 percent of the amounts made available under this
7 section for each fiscal year to carry out this sub-
8 section.”.

9 (c) EXPANSION OF MIDDLE MILE INFRASTRUCTURE
10 INTO RURAL AREAS GRANTS.—Section 602 of the Rural
11 Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb–1) is amend-
12 ed by adding at the end the following:

13 “(h) AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO CERTAIN
14 ENTITIES TO COLLECT BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE
15 DATA.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
17 provision of this section, the Secretary may make a
18 grant under this section to a unit of local govern-
19 ment, a tribal government or a unit of tribal govern-
20 ment, an economic development or other community
21 organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in
22 section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells elec-
23 tric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone co-
24 operative, or an internet service provider that has
25 not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose

1 of enabling the collection of data relating to where
2 broadband infrastructure is located, cost of
3 broadband service, cost of such service by tier of
4 service, actual speed available at household, speed
5 advertised, and which homes are provided with non-
6 satellite broadband service, without regard to any
7 household service percentage requirement, and in de-
8 termining the eligibility of any such entity for such
9 a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is
10 not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a
11 population of 25,000 or more as determined by the
12 Bureau of the Census.

13 “(2) LIMITATION ON GRANT AMOUNT.—The
14 amount of a grant made under this subsection shall
15 not exceed \$50,000.

16 “(3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR
17 GRANTS.—The Secretary may use not more than 1
18 percent of the amounts made available under this
19 section for each fiscal year to carry out this sub-
20 section.”.

21 (d) INNOVATIVE BROADBAND ADVANCEMENT
22 GRANTS.—Section 603 of the Rural Electrification Act of
23 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb–2), as amended by section 2 of this
24 Act, is amended by adding at the end the following:

1 “(f) AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO CERTAIN EN-
2 TITIES TO COLLECT BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE
3 DATA.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
5 provision of this section, the Secretary may make a
6 grant under this section to a unit of local govern-
7 ment, a tribal government or a unit of tribal govern-
8 ment, an economic development or other community
9 organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in
10 section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells elec-
11 tric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone co-
12 operative, or an internet service provider that has
13 not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose
14 of enabling the collection of data relating to where
15 broadband infrastructure is located, cost of
16 broadband service, cost of such service by tier of
17 service, actual speed available at household, speed
18 advertised, and which homes are provided with non-
19 satellite broadband service, without regard to any
20 household service percentage requirement, and in de-
21 termining the eligibility of any such entity for such
22 a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is
23 not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a
24 population of 25,000 or more as determined by the
25 Bureau of the Census.

1 “(2) LIMITATION ON GRANT AMOUNT.—The
2 amount of a grant made under this subsection shall
3 not exceed \$50,000.

4 “(3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR
5 GRANTS.—The Secretary may use not more than 1
6 percent of the amounts made available under this
7 section for each fiscal year to carry out this sub-
8 section.”.

9 (e) COMMUNITY CONNECT GRANTS.—Section 604 of
10 the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb–
11 3) is amended by adding at the end the following:

12 “(h) AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO CERTAIN
13 ENTITIES TO COLLECT BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE
14 DATA.—

15 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
16 provision of this section, the Secretary may make a
17 grant under this section to a unit of local govern-
18 ment, a tribal government or a unit of tribal govern-
19 ment, an economic development or other community
20 organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in
21 section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells elec-
22 tric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone co-
23 operative, or an internet service provider that has
24 not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose
25 of enabling the collection of data relating to where

1 broadband infrastructure is located, cost of
2 broadband service, cost of such service by tier of
3 service, actual speed available at household, speed
4 advertised, and which homes are provided with non-
5 satellite broadband service, without regard to any
6 household service percentage requirement, and in de-
7 termining the eligibility of any such entity for such
8 a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is
9 not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a
10 population of 25,000 or more as determined by the
11 Bureau of the Census.

12 “(2) LIMITATION ON GRANT AMOUNT.—The
13 amount of a grant made under this subsection shall
14 not exceed \$50,000.

15 “(3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR
16 GRANTS.—The Secretary may use not more than 1
17 percent of the amounts made available under this
18 section for each fiscal year to carry out this sub-
19 section.”.

20 (f) DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE
21 GRANTS.—Section 2333 of the Food, Agriculture, Con-
22 servation and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 950aaa–2) is
23 amended by adding at the end the following:

1 “(j) AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO CERTAIN EN-
2 TITIES TO COLLECT BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE
3 DATA.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
5 provision of this section, the Secretary may make a
6 grant under this section to a unit of local govern-
7 ment, a tribal government or a unit of tribal govern-
8 ment, an economic development or other community
9 organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in
10 section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells elec-
11 tric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone co-
12 operative, or an internet service provider that has
13 not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose
14 of enabling the collection of data relating to where
15 broadband infrastructure is located, cost of
16 broadband service, cost of such service by tier of
17 service, actual speed available at household, speed
18 advertised, and which homes are provided with non-
19 satellite broadband service, without regard to any
20 household service percentage requirement, and in de-
21 termining the eligibility of any such entity for such
22 a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is
23 not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a
24 population of 25,000 or more as determined by the
25 Bureau of the Census.

1 “(2) LIMITATION ON GRANT AMOUNT.—The
2 amount of a grant made under this subsection shall
3 not exceed \$50,000.

4 “(3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR
5 GRANTS.—The Secretary may use not more than 1
6 percent of the amounts made available under this
7 section for each fiscal year to carry out this sub-
8 section.”.

9 (g) RECONNECT GRANTS.—Section 779 of division A
10 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (132 Stat.
11 399; Public Law 115–141) is amended by inserting “:
12 Provided further, That, notwithstanding any other provi-
13 sion of this section, the Secretary may use not more than
14 1 percent of the amounts made available to carry out this
15 section to make grants, each not exceeding \$50,000, to
16 a unit of local government, a tribal government or a unit
17 of tribal government, an economic development or other
18 community organization, an electric cooperative (as de-
19 fined in section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells
20 electric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone coop-
21 erative, or an internet service provider that has not more
22 than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose of enabling the
23 collection of data relating to where broadband infrastruc-
24 ture is located, cost of broadband service, cost of such
25 service by tier of service, actual speed available at house-

1 hold, speed advertised, and which homes are provided with
 2 non-satellite broadband service, without regard to any
 3 household service percentage requirement, and in deter-
 4 mining the eligibility of any such entity for such a grant,
 5 the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is not in an ur-
 6 banized area or urban cluster with a population of 25,000
 7 or more as determined by the Bureau of the Census” be-
 8 fore the period.

9 (h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
 10 this section shall take effect 1 year after the date of the
 11 enactment of this Act.

12 **SEC. 9. LIMITATIONS ON RESERVATION OF FUNDS.**

13 Section 701(e) of the Rural Electrification Act of
 14 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950cc(e)) is amended to read as follows:

15 “(e) LIMITATIONS ON RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—
 16 Not less than 3 but not more than 7 percent of the
 17 amounts appropriated to carry out title VI shall be set
 18 aside to be used—

19 “(1) for administrative costs to carry out pro-
 20 grams under title VI;

21 “(2) for technical assistance and pre-develop-
 22 ment planning activities to support the most rural
 23 communities;

24 “(3) to conduct oversight under title VI;

- 1 “(4) to implement accountability measures and
- 2 related activities authorized under title VI; and
- 3 “(5) to carry out this section.”.

