117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4374

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on __________

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”.

6 SEC. 2. INNOVATIVE BROADBAND ADVANCEMENT PRO-
7 GRAM.

8 Section 603(e) of the Rural Electrification Act of
9 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb-2(e)) is amended to read as follows:
“(e) Authorization of Appropriations.—

“(1) In general.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary $300,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2030, to remain available until expended, to carry out projects in accordance with this section—

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

“(B) in the case of each of fiscal years 2023 through 2030, in States selected by the Secretary to be diverse on the basis of geography, topography, and demographics.

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

SEC. 3. RURAL BROADBAND PROGRAM LOANS AND GRANTS.

(a) In General.—Section 601 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb) is amended—

(1) in the section heading, by striking “ACCESS TO BROADBAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
SERVICE IN RURAL AREAS” and inserting “RE-
CONNECT RURAL BROADBAND PROGRAM”;
(2) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the
following:
“(a) ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSE.—The Secretary
shall establish a program, which shall be known as the
‘ReConnect Rural Broadband Program’, to provide grants,
loans, and loan guarantees to finance the costs of the con-
struction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and
equipment for broadband service in rural areas.”;
(3) in subsection (c)(2), by striking subpara-
graphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following:
“(A) IN GENERAL.—In making grants,
making loans, and guaranteeing loans under
paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give the
highest priority to applications for projects to
provide broadband service to unserved rural
communities that do not have any residential
broadband service of at least—
“(i) a 10-Mbps downstream trans-
mission capacity; and
“(ii) a 1-Mbps upstream transmission
capacity.
“(B) OTHER.—After giving priority to the
applications described in clauses (i) and (ii) of
subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall then give priority to applications for projects to provide broadband service to rural communities—

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

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

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

(4) in subsection (c)(3)—

(A) in subparagraph (D)(i)—

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

(ii) in subclause (II), by striking “any of subclauses (I) through (IV) of paragraph (2)(B)(i)” and inserting “clause (i) or (ii) of paragraph (2)(B)”;

and
(B) by striking subparagraph (E) and inserting the following:

"(E) APPLICATIONS.—

"(i) GRANT-ONLY APPLICATIONS.—
The Secretary shall establish an application process that permits an application for a grant-only award.

"(ii) COMBINED APPLICATIONS.—The Secretary shall establish an application process that permits—

"(I) a single application for a grant and a loan under title I or II, or this title, that is associated with the grant; and

"(II) provides a single decision to award the grant and the loan."

(5) in subsection (d)(2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) by striking "subparagraphs (B) and (C)" and inserting "subparagraph (B)";

(ii) by striking "—" and all that follows through "(i)"; and

(iii) by striking the semicolon and all that follows through "providers";
(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking
"(A)(i)" and inserting "(A)"; and

(C) by striking subparagraph (C);

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

(7) in subsection (j)(1)—

(A) by striking "$350,000,000" and insert-
ing "$5,250,000,000";

(B) by striking "2019 through 2023" and
inserting "2022 through 2030"; and

(C) by striking "until expended" and in-
serting "for 2 fiscal years after the fiscal year
for which appropriated"; and

(8) in subsection (k), by striking "2023" and
inserting "2030".

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

(c) TRANSITION RULES.—

(1) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Not more than 1 percent of the unob-
ligated balances of amounts made available as of
June 1, 2022, to carry out the pilot program de-
scribed in section 779 of the Consolidated Approp-
riations Act, 2018 (Public Law 115–141) may be
used for the costs of transitioning from the pilot program to the program under section 601 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended by this Act.

(2) CONSOLIDATION OF FUNDS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The unobligated balances of all amounts made available on or before June 30, 2023, to carry out the pilot program described in section 779 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public Law 115–141) that are in excess of the amount described in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph are hereby transferred to and merged with amounts made available to carry out the program authorized under section 601 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936.

(B) UNFUNDED APPROVALS.—The amount described in this subparagraph is the amount required to fully fund each project approved as of June 30, 2023, under the pilot program described in such section 779 for which amounts were not obligated or partially obligated as of such date.
SEC. 4. COMMUNITY CONNECT GRANTS.

Section 604(g) of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb-3(g)) is amended by striking "$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023" and inserting "$150,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2030, to remain available for 2 fiscal years after the fiscal year for which appropriated"; and

SEC. 5. DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE LOANS AND GRANTS.

Section 2335A of the Food Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 950aaa–5) is amended by striking "$82,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023" and inserting "$150,000,000, to remain available for 2 fiscal years after the fiscal year for which appropriated".

SEC. 6. EXPANSION OF MIDDLE MILE INFRASTRUCTURE INTO RURAL AREAS.

Section 602(g) of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb-1(g)) is amended by striking "$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2023" and inserting "$300,000,000 for each fiscal year, to remain available for 2 fiscal years after the fiscal year for which appropriated".

SEC. 7. BROADBAND CONNECTORS PROGRAM.

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

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

SEC. 8. COMMUNITY BROADBAND MAPPING.

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

(b) RURAL BROADBAND ACCESS GRANTS.—Section
601 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C.
950bb) is amended by adding at the end the following:
“(l) AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO CERTAIN EN-
TITIES TO COLLECT BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE
DATA.—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
provision of this section, the Secretary may make a
grant under this section to a unit of local govern-
ment, a tribal government or a unit of tribal govern-
ment, an economic development or other community organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells electric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone cooperative, or an internet service provider that has not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose of enabling the collection of data relating to where broadband infrastructure is located, cost of broadband service, cost of such service by tier of service, actual speed available at household, speed advertised, and which homes are provided with non-satellite broadband service, without regard to any household service percentage requirement, and in determining the eligibility of any such entity for such a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a population of 25,000 or more as determined by the Bureau of the Census.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
provision of this section, the Secretary may make a
grant under this section to a unit of local govern-
ment, a tribal government or a unit of tribal govern-
ment, an economic development or other community
organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells electric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone cooperative, or an internet service provider that has not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose of enabling the collection of data relating to where broadband infrastructure is located, cost of broadband service, cost of such service by tier of service, actual speed available at household, speed advertised, and which homes are provided with non-satellite broadband service, without regard to any household service percentage requirement, and in determining the eligibility of any such entity for such a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a population of 25,000 or more as determined by the Bureau of the Census.

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

"(3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR GRANTS.—The Secretary may use not more than 1 percent of the amounts made available under this section for each fiscal year to carry out this subsection."
(g) **ReConnect Grants.**—Section 779 of division A of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (132 Stat. 399; Public Law 115–141) is amended by inserting ":

Provided further, That, notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the Secretary may use not more than 1 percent of the amounts made available to carry out this section to make grants, each not exceeding $50,000, to a unit of local government, a tribal government or a unit of tribal government, an economic development or other community organization, an electric cooperative (as defined in section 3 of the Federal Power Act) that sells electric energy to persons in rural areas, a telephone cooperative, or an internet service provider that has not more than 100,000 subscribers, for the purpose of enabling the collection of data relating to where broadband infrastructure is located, cost of broadband service, cost of such service by tier of service, actual speed available at household, speed advertised, and which homes are provided with non-satellite broadband service, without regard to any household service percentage requirement, and in determining the eligibility of any such entity for such a grant, the term ‘rural area’ means an area that is not in an urbanized area or urban cluster with a population of 25,000 or more as determined by the Bureau of the Census” before the period.
(h) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall take effect 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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

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

“(e) **LIMITATIONS ON RESERVATION OF FUNDS.**—

Not less than 3 but not more than 7 percent of the amounts appropriated to carry out title VI shall be set aside to be used—

“(1) for administrative costs to carry out programs under title VI;

“(2) for technical assistance and pre-development planning activities to support the most rural communities;

“(3) to conduct oversight under title VI;

“(4) to implement accountability measures and related activities authorized under title VI; and

“(5) to carry out this section.”.