
Capital Budget Committee

HB 1740

Brief Description: Concerning the authority of the community economic revitalization board.

Sponsors: Representatives Taylor, Boehnke, Ryu, Berg, Ramel, Sullivan, Johnson, J., Harris-Talley and Frame; by request of Community Economic Revitalization Board.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Codifies the Community Economic Revitalization Board broadband grant and loan program.• Permits applicants in both rural and urban counties and communities to apply for the program.
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Hearing Date: 2/1/22

Staff: Richelle Geiger (786-7139).

Background:

Community Economic Revitalization Board.

The Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) provides financial assistance to local governments and federally recognized tribes for public infrastructure that encourages new business development and economic growth. The Department of Commerce provides administrative support for CERB.

The CERB is authorized to make direct loans and grants to political subdivisions of the state and to federally recognized Indian tribes to finance public facilities. Loans and grants are available for eligible broadband infrastructure projects.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

CERB Broadband Grant and Loan Program.

The CERB offers first-come, first-served low-interest loan and grant packages to eligible applicants to finance the cost to build infrastructure to provide high-speed, open-access broadband service to rural underserved communities for the purpose of community and economic development. The program was first authorized in the 2018 Supplemental Capital Budget and has been reauthorized biennially. No more than 50 percent of the funds may be awarded as grants in any biennium.

Local governments and federally recognized tribes located in rural counties or a rural community, as defined by CERB, may apply for this program. Rural counties are those with a population density of fewer than 100 persons per square mile or a county smaller than 225 square miles, as determined by the Office of Financial Management. Rural communities are cities in urban counties that have a population of less than 20,000 and federally recognized tribes.

Eligible broadband infrastructure construction projects include tower construction and fiber installation and expansion. When evaluating and prioritizing projects, CERB must consider:

- the project's value to the community, feasibility, and readiness to proceed;
- the commitment of local matching resources and local participation;
- if the project uses a technology-neutral approach in order to expand access at the lowest cost; and
- if the project is included in a capital facilities plan, comprehensive plan, or local economic development plan consistent with the applicable state planning requirements.

Summary of Bill:

The CERB Broadband grant and loan program is codified. Applicants in both rural and urban counties and communities may apply for the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.