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**Innovation, Community & Economic  
Development, & Veterans Committee**

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**HB 1982**

**Brief Description:** Concerning the authority of the community economic revitalization board with respect to loans and grants to political subdivisions and federally recognized Indian tribes for broadband.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Waters, Shavers, Ryu, Couture, Ramos and McClintock.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Codifies the Community Economic Revitalization Board Rural Broadband Program.

**Hearing Date:** 1/9/24

**Staff:** Emily Poole (786-7106).

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

Community Economic Revitalization Board Rural Broadband Program.

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*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.*

Since 2018, the CERB has operated a Rural Broadband Program (Program), which provides grants and loans to local governments and federally recognized tribes for the purposes of financing the cost to build infrastructure to provide high-speed, open-access broadband service to rural and underserved communities for the purposes of economic development or community development. The Program was first authorized in the 2018 Supplemental Capital Budget and most recently received additional funding in the 2021-2023 Capital Budget.

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 the CERB, may apply for the Program.

When evaluating and prioritizing projects, the 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 applicable state planning requirements.

Before any financial assistance application is approved, the local government or the federally recognized tribe seeking the assistance must demonstrate to the CERB that no other timely source of funding is available to it at costs reasonably similar to financing available from the CERB.

**Summary of Bill:**

The CERB Rural Broadband Program is codified.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 3, 2024.

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