

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1982

C 86 L 24
Synopsis as Enacted

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, McClintock, Callan, Cheney, Doglio, Sandlin, Paul, Harris, Berg, Tharinger, Riccelli and Santos.

House Committee on Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans
House Committee on Capital Budget
Senate Committee on Business, Financial Services, Gaming & Trade
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

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.

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 or community development. The Program was first authorized in the 2018 Supplemental Capital Budget

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and most recently received additional funding in the 2021-2023 Capital Budget.

Summary:

The Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) Rural Broadband Program (Program) is codified.

Local governments and federally recognized tribes located in rural counties or a rural community, as defined by the CERB, may apply for the Program.

Under the Program, the CERB may provide financial assistance only for projects located in a rural community or rural county that improve broadband in order to: (i) drive job creation, promote innovation, and expand markets for local businesses; or (ii) serve the needs of the local education system, health care system, public safety system, industries and businesses, governmental operations, and citizens.

The CERB may not provide financial assistance for: (i) a project the primary purpose of which is to facilitate or promote a retail shopping development or expansion; or (ii) the deployment of publicly owned telecommunications network infrastructure solely for the sake of creating competitive, publicly owned telecommunications network infrastructure.

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.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0
Senate	48	1

Effective: June 6, 2024