

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fourth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 23-0334.01 Nicole Myers x4326

SENATE BILL 23-006

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Roberts and Rich,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

McLachlan and Catlin,

Senate Committees

Business, Labor, & Technology

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE IN**
102 **THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

In 2019, the rural opportunity office (office) began its work in the office of economic development. The bill codifies the office. The director of the office is designated by and reports to the director of the office of economic development.

The office is required to serve as Colorado's central coordinator of rural economic development matters, work with coal transitioning

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

communities to explore unique business and economic development opportunities, make recommendations that inform the governor's policy on rural economic development matters, and measure the success of program outreach and determine whether Colorado's rural communities receive more statewide funding as a result of the efforts of the office.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 24-48.5-133 as
3 follows:

4 **24-48.5-133. Rural opportunity office - creation - duties -**
5 **legislative declaration.** (1) (a) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HEREBY FINDS
6 AND DECLARES THAT:

7 (I) RURAL COLORADO IS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT TO THE CULTURE
8 AND ECONOMY OF THE ENTIRE STATE; HOWEVER, RURAL COMMUNITIES
9 FACE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES THAT ARE NOT EXPERIENCED IN MORE
10 URBAN AREAS;

11 (II) RURAL COMMUNITIES DO NOT BENEFIT FROM THE ECONOMIES
12 OF SCALE OR DIVERSIFICATION FOUND IN LARGER, METROPOLITAN
13 REGIONS;

14 (III) MOST RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE MISSING FOUNDATIONAL
15 DATA, STRATEGIES, CAPACITY, AND CONNECTIONS TO PLANNING AND
16 IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES TO HELP THEM RESPOND, INNOVATE, AND
17 DIVERSIFY FROM A PREVALENCE OF SINGLE-INDUSTRY ECONOMIES;

18 (IV) AN EXTENDED SUPPORT SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES CONSISTENT
19 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND
20 IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING IS DESPERATELY NEEDED IN RURAL COLORADO
21 WHERE LOCAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS TURN OVER MORE RAPIDLY THAN IN
22 URBAN AREAS;

23 (V) EVERY RURAL COMMUNITY IS DIFFERENT, AND OUTREACH AND

1 PROGRAMMING NEEDS TO BE CUSTOMIZED TO AN INDIVIDUAL
2 COMMUNITY'S NEEDS, CONDITIONS, AND CAPACITY;

3 (VI) RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SUPPORT
4 REQUIRE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS IN ADDITION TO TARGETED PROGRAMS
5 TO SUPPORT LONG-TERM RESILIENCE;

6 (VII) THERE IS A DEMONSTRATED NEED IN THE STATE FOR A
7 CENTRALIZED OFFICE TO HELP CONNECT COMMUNITIES WITH THE WIDE
8 RANGE OF RURAL-FOCUSED RECOVERY PROGRAMMING RESULTING FROM
9 STATE AND FEDERAL STIMULUS EFFORTS;

10 (VIII) SINCE THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE BEGAN ITS WORK IN
11 THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN 2019, THE RURAL
12 OPPORTUNITY OFFICE HAS:

13 (A) PROVIDED CRITICAL COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC SUPPORT TO THE
14 STATE'S RURAL AREAS AND BUILT IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL CONNECTIONS
15 WITH RURAL STAKEHOLDERS;

16 (B) PROVIDED SUPPORT TO THE STATE'S RURAL PARTNERS BY
17 CONNECTING THEM TO RELEVANT PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE OF
18 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ALIGNED STATE, FEDERAL, NONPROFIT,
19 AND PRIVATE PARTNER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS AND FACILITATED
20 COLLABORATION WITH STATE AGENCIES REGARDING RURAL ISSUES; AND

21 (C) PROVIDED FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE STATE PROGRAMS THAT
22 PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO RURAL COLORADO AND INFORMED THE
23 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INITIATIVES, POLICY DECISIONS, AND LEGISLATION
24 THAT INFLUENCES RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STATEWIDE;

25 (b) THEREFORE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES IT
26 TO BE THE POLICY OF THE STATE TO CONTINUE TO:

27 (I) INCREASE THE ECONOMIC RESILIENCY OF RURAL COLORADO

1 WITH COORDINATED, ON-THE-GROUND OUTREACH TO RURAL COMMUNITIES
2 ACROSS THE STATE;

3 (II) INCREASE ACCESS TO SPECIFIC AND CUSTOMIZED EDUCATION,
4 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING PROVIDED TO
5 RURAL COMMUNITIES; AND

6 (III) COORDINATE MESSAGING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH
7 RURAL COMMUNITIES TO INCREASE ACCESS TO THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC
8 DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT
9 THE HEALTH AND VITALITY OF RURAL COLORADO.

10 (c) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FURTHER FINDS AND DECLARES THAT
11 THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE, AS CODIFIED BY THIS SECTION, IS THE
12 DIVISION WITHIN THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT IS BEST
13 SITUATED TO EFFECTIVELY CURATE AND PRESENT TO RURAL
14 STAKEHOLDERS THE FULL SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE THROUGH
15 THE OFFICE, THE STATE, AND FEDERAL PARTNERS TO FOSTER AND
16 PROMOTE RURAL PROSPERITY IN THE STATE.

17 (2) THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE IS HEREBY CREATED WITHIN
18 THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE DIRECTOR OF THE RURAL
19 OPPORTUNITY OFFICE IS DESIGNATED BY AND SHALL REPORT TO THE
20 DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

21 (3) THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE SHALL:

22 (a) SERVE AS COLORADO'S CENTRAL COORDINATOR OF RURAL
23 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS, ESPECIALLY REGARDING THE
24 PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES AVAILABLE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES
25 THROUGH THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND PROVIDE
26 SUPPORT AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND
27 PROGRAMS THAT DEAL WITH RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS,

1 INCLUDING THE JUST TRANSITION OFFICE CREATED IN SECTION 8-83-503
2 (1);

3 (b) AT THE DISCRETION OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE RURAL
4 OPPORTUNITY OFFICE, WORK WITH COAL TRANSITIONING COMMUNITIES TO
5 EXPLORE UNIQUE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
6 OPPORTUNITIES, INCLUDING WORKING WITH COAL TRANSITIONING
7 COMMUNITIES AND STATE AGENCIES TO ACCESS FEDERAL, STATE, AND
8 LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR THOSE UNIQUE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC
9 DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES. THE DIRECTOR AND COAL TRANSITIONING
10 COMMUNITIES MAY WORK IN COORDINATION WITH STATE AGENCIES,
11 INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE JUST TRANSITION OFFICE CREATED IN
12 SECTION 8-83-503 (1), THE DIVISION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE
13 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL AFFAIRS, FEDERAL AGENCIES, AND COMMUNITY
14 NONPROFITS;

15 (c) MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT INFORM THE GOVERNOR'S
16 POLICY ON RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS, INCLUDING POLICY
17 ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES UNIQUE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES;
18 AND

19 (d) MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF PROGRAM OUTREACH AND CONDUCT
20 RESEARCH TO DETERMINE WHETHER COLORADO'S RURAL COMMUNITIES
21 RECEIVE MORE STATEWIDE FUNDING AS A RESULT OF THE EFFORTS OF THE
22 RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE.

23 **SECTION 2. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
24 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
25 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
26 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
27 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this

1 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take
2 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
3 November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
4 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.