

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

**PREAMENDED**

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee  
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 23-0334.01 Nicole Myers x4326

**SENATE BILL 23-006**

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**SENATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Roberts and Rich,**

**HOUSE SPONSORSHIP**

**McLachlan and Catlin,**

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**Senate Committees**

Business, Labor, & Technology  
Appropriations

**House Committees**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

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

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**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 law.  
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

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.

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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 WITH CERTAIN STAFF PHYSICALLY  
24 LOCATED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES ACROSS COLORADO. IN PARTICULAR,  
25 THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE SHALL COORDINATE THE PROGRAMS AND  
26 INITIATIVES AVAILABLE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE OFFICE,  
27 CONNECT RURAL COMMUNITIES TO GRANT WRITING TECHNICAL SUPPORT

1 OPPORTUNITIES, AND PROVIDE SUPPORT AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER  
2 STATE AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS THAT DEAL WITH RURAL ECONOMIC  
3 DEVELOPMENT MATTERS, INCLUDING THE JUST TRANSITION OFFICE  
4 CREATED IN SECTION 8-83-503 (1).

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

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

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

25 **SECTION 2. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
26 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the  
27 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except

1 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V  
2 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this  
3 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take  
4 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in  
5 November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the  
6 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.