

**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

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Roberts and Rich,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

McLachlan and Catlin,

Senate Committees

Business, Labor, & Technology
Appropriations

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE IN**
102 **THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND, IN CONNECTION**
103 **THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.**

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

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.

rural economic development matters, work with coal transitioning 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;

1 (V) EVERY RURAL COMMUNITY IS DIFFERENT, AND OUTREACH AND
2 PROGRAMMING NEEDS TO BE CUSTOMIZED TO AN INDIVIDUAL
3 COMMUNITY'S NEEDS, CONDITIONS, AND CAPACITY;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (I) INCREASE THE ECONOMIC RESILIENCY OF RURAL COLORADO
2 WITH COORDINATED, ON-THE-GROUND OUTREACH TO RURAL COMMUNITIES
3 ACROSS THE STATE;

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

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

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

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

22 (3) THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE SHALL:

23 (a) SERVE AS COLORADO'S CENTRAL COORDINATOR OF RURAL
24 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS WITH CERTAIN STAFF PHYSICALLY
25 LOCATED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES ACROSS COLORADO. IN PARTICULAR,
26 THE RURAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE SHALL COORDINATE THE PROGRAMS AND
27 INITIATIVES AVAILABLE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE OFFICE,

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

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

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

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

26 **SECTION 2. Appropriation.** For the 2023-24 state fiscal year,
27 \$299,193 is appropriated to the office of the governor for use by

1 economic development programs. This appropriation is from the general
2 fund and is based on an assumption that the office will require an
3 additional 3.0 FTE. To implement this act, the office may use this
4 appropriation for the rural opportunity office.

5 **SECTION 3. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
6 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
7 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
8 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
9 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this
10 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take
11 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
12 November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
13 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.