

HB 1859 -- BROADBAND INTERNET GRANT PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Riggs

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Economic Development by a vote of 13 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 10 to 1.

This bill extends the sunset on the Broadband Internet Grant Program to August 28, 2027.

This bill is similar to SB 632 (2019).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that by extending the sunset in current law, this bill assists bringing rural Missouri into the 21st century. It was stated that Missouri is currently 41st in access to broadband and 49th in broadband speed when compared to the other 50 states. By extending this grant, it will assist Missouri in expanding broadband access and speed. Supporters also claimed that this bill would benefit agriculture in Missouri and provide economic development in areas that needs access to quality broadband with an extension of the sunset in existing grant program.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Riggs; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Economic Development Council; Century Link; Missouri Association of Municipal Utilities; BJC Healthcare; Cox Healthcare; Historic Revitalization for Missouri; Bayer; Western Governors University; City Utilities of Springfield; Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Missouri Realtors; Tim Arbeiter, Missouri Department of Economic Development; Missouri Cable Telecommunication Association; and Missouri Small Telephone Company Group.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.