

HCS HB 2886 -- BROADBAND GRANT PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Riggs

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Economic Development by a vote of 17 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative by a vote of 10 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 2886.

This bill increases the speed requirements for the definitions of an "underserved area" and "unserved area" for the purposes of the Broadband Grant Program.

The bill also requires that projects offering broadband internet speeds of 500 megabits per-second download and upload be given priority in grant awards. Also, any entity that was the second place finisher in any previous federal broadband funds application has the right of first refusal to accept defaulted funds recovered by the State, subject to approval by the State Broadband Office.

Currently, if the Department of Economic Development determines that a broadband provider provides service, has begun construction on service, or has committed to service at a speed of 25 megabits per-second download and three megabits per-second upload, the Department cannot fund a different provider that challenges if the area is served. The bill increases the speed the original provider must provide to be considered served to 500 megabits per-second download and 30 megabits per-second upload.

The Broadband Grant Program currently expires June 30, 2027. The bill extends the program through June 30, 2030.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill would be good for Missouri residents overall. Some say that the most important piece of this bill is the sunset date being pushed back three years, which will allow more projects to start and finish.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Riggs; and AARP.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill would be beneficial to Missouri but cable companies and projects need to be included.

Testifying in person against the bill were Matthew Smith, Associated Industries Of Missouri; Chance Hepola, Missouri Chamber Of Commerce; Mike Lodewegen, MCTA.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the sunset extension needs to be pushed even further into the future as it takes years to complete a single project. This would allow for even more projects to be completed. Furthermore, state needs to figure out how to fund projects for communities that will not benefit from this bill.

Testifying in person on the bill was Bj Tomksley, Department Of Economic Development.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.