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116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1046

To establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 4, 2019

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. JONES, Mr. JOHNSON, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mrs. BLACKBURN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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A BILL

To establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Advancing Critical Connectivity Expands Service, Small Business Resources, Opportunities, Access, and Data Based on Assessed Need and Demand Act'' or the ''ACCESS BROADBAND Act''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) AGENCY.—The term ''agency'' has the meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term ''Assistant Secretary'' means the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

(3) COMMISSION.—The term ''Commission'' means the Federal Communications Commission.

(4) FEDERAL BROADBAND SUPPORT PROGRAM.—The term ''Federal broadband support program'' does not include any Universal Service Fund program and means any of the following programs (or any other similar Federal program) to the extent the program offers broadband internet service or programs for promoting broadband access and adoption for various demographic communities through various media for residential, commercial, or community providers, or academic establishments:

(A) The Telecommunications and Technology Program of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

(B) The following programs of the Rural Utilities Service of the Department of Agriculture:

(i) The Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan and Loan Guarantee Program.

(ii) The Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program authorized under section 601 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb).

(iii) The Substantially Underserved Trust Area Initiative.

(iv) The Community Connect Grant Program established under title III of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations, 2004 (division A of Public Law 108–199; 118 Stat. 19).

(v) The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program under section 2333 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Free Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 950aaa–2).

(C) The following programs of the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce:

(i) The Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs.

(ii) The Planning and Local Technical Assistance Programs.

(D) The following programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development:

(i) The Community Development Block Grant Program under title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.).

(ii) The loan guarantee program under section 108 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5308) (commonly known as the ''Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program'').

(iii) Assistance from the Public Housing Capital Fund established under section 9(d) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437g(d)).

(iv) Assistance from the Public Housing Operating Fund established under section 9(e) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437g(e)).

(v) The Multifamily Housing Programs.

(vi) The Indian Community Development Block Grant Program.

(vii) The Indian Housing Block Grant Program under section 101 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4111).

(viii) Loan guarantees under title VI of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4191 et seq.) (commonly known as the ''Title VI Loan Guarantee Program'').

(ix) The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative.

(x) The HOME Investment Partnerships Program authorized under title II of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 12721 et seq.).

(xi) The Housing Trust Fund established under section 1338 of the Federal Housing Enterprises Financial Safety and Soundness Act of 1992 (12 U.S.C. 4568).

(xii) The Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS Program authorized

under the AIDS Housing Opportunity Act (42 U.S.C. 12901 et seq.).

(E) The American Job Centers of the Employment and Training Administration of the Department of Labor.

(F) The Library Services and Technology Grant Programs of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

(5) OFFICE.—The term ''Office'' means the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth established under section 3.

(6) UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND PROGRAM.—The term ''Universal Service Fund program'' means any program authorized under section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254) to help deploy broadband.

(7) UNIVERSAL SERVICE MECHANISM.—The term ''universal service mechanism'' means any funding stream provided by a Universal Service Fund program to support broadband access.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND GROWTH.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary shall establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth within the Na-

tional Telecommunications and Information Administration.

SEC. 4. DUTIES.

(a) OUTREACH.—The Office shall—

(1) connect with communities that need access to high-speed internet and improved digital inclusion efforts through various forms of outreach and communication techniques;

(2) hold regional workshops across the United States to share best practices and effective strategies for promoting broadband access and adoption;

(3) develop targeted broadband training and presentations for various demographic communities through various media; and

(4) develop and distribute publications (including toolkits, primers, manuals, and white papers) providing guidance, strategies, and insights to communities as the communities develop strategies to expand broadband access and adoption.

(b) TRACKING OF FEDERAL DOLLARS.—

(1) BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE.—The Office shall track the construction and use of and access to any broadband infrastructure built using any Federal support in a central database.

(2) ACCOUNTING MECHANISM.—The Office shall develop a streamlined accounting mechanism by which any agency offering a Federal broadband support program, and the Commission through the Universal Service Fund, shall provide the information described in paragraph (1) in a standardized and efficient fashion.

(3) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and every year thereafter, the Office shall make public on the website of the Office and submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a report on the following:

(A) A description of the work of the Office for the previous year and the number of residents of the United States who received broadband access as a result of a Federal broadband support program or a Universal Service Fund program.

(B) The number of residents of the United States described in subparagraph (A), broken down by the Federal broadband support program or universal service mechanism to which the broadband access was attributable.

(C) An estimate of the economic impact of the broadband deployment efforts described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) on the local economy in areas receiving assistance through those efforts, including any effect on small businesses or jobs.

SEC. 5. STREAMLINED APPLICATIONS FOR SUPPORT.

(a) AGENCY CONSULTATION.—The Office shall consult with any agency offering a Federal broadband support program to streamline and standardize the application process for grants or other financial assistance from the program.

(b) AGENCY STREAMLINING.—Any agency offering a Federal broadband support program shall amend the application for broadband support from that program, to the extent practicable and as necessary, to streamline and standardize applications for Federal broadband support programs across the Federal Government.

(c) SINGLE APPLICATION.—To the greatest extent practicable, the Office shall seek to create 1 application that may be submitted to apply for all, or substantially all, Federal broadband support programs.

(d) WEBSITE REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Office shall create a central website through which a potential appli-

cant can learn about and apply for support through any Federal broadband support program.

SEC. 6. COORDINATION OF SUPPORT.

The Office, any agency that offers a Federal broadband support program, and the Commission, through the Universal Service Fund, shall coordinate with each other to ensure that Federal support for broadband is being distributed in an efficient, technology-neutral, and financially sustainable manner, with the goal of serving the largest number of persons in the United States while avoiding overbuilding and promoting the most job and economic growth for all residents of the United States.

SEC. 7. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act is intended to alter or amend any provision of section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254).

SEC. 8. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act. This Act shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized.

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