

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6459

To provide funds to enable counties to make competitive grants to qualified local units of government to address major community development and public infrastructure challenges, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 7, 2020

Ms. CRAIG introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To provide funds to enable counties to make competitive grants to qualified local units of government to address major community development and public infrastructure challenges, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Small Cities and
5 Towns Investment Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. GRANTS FOR COUNTIES.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture,
8 through the Rural Development Innovation Center, shall

1 make a block grant in accordance with this Act to a county
2 with a submission approved by the Secretary under section
3 3, for each year in the 5-year period during which the plan
4 included in the submission is to be in effect.

5 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

6 (1) QUALIFIED LOCAL UNIT OF GOVERN-
7 MENT.—The term “qualified local unit of govern-
8 ment” means a town, city, village, township, or simi-
9 lar entity that has a population of no greater than
10 30,000 individuals.

11 (2) REGIONAL PLANNING ENTITY.—The term
12 “regional planning entity” means a regional plan-
13 ning commission, regional council, or council of gov-
14 ernments.

15 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
16 the Secretary of Agriculture.

17 **SEC. 3. SUBMISSION; CONSOLIDATED PLAN.**

18 (a) SUBMISSION.—A county that desires grants
19 under this Act shall submit to the Secretary a consolidated
20 plan that—

21 (1) provides a broad overview of the projects for
22 which the grants are to be used;

23 (2) identifies ways to engage residents of the
24 county (including by holding public hearings, pub-
25 lishing information on available funds, or providing

1 technical assistance for persons interested in apply-
2 ing for grant funds) throughout the process of ap-
3 plying for, and using grants provided under this Act;

4 (3) identifies specific areas in need of improve-
5 ment in the county;

6 (4) describes the short- and long-term commu-
7 nity and economic development objectives of the
8 county;

9 (5) identifies the private, public, and nonprofit
10 institutions that are willing and able to assist in car-
11 rying out the plan;

12 (6) has been developed in coordination with the
13 regional planning entity for the area in which the
14 county is located (or, if there is no such entity for
15 the area, the Secretary), and using the Comprehen-
16 sive Economic Development Strategy developed by
17 the Economic Development Administration in coordi-
18 nation with the regional planning entity (or, if there
19 is no such entity, the Secretary);

20 (7) specifies the 5-year period during which the
21 plan is to be in effect;

22 (8) is submitted to the Secretary and the office
23 of economic development of the State in which the
24 county is located, not later than 45 days before the

1 beginning of the 5-year period referred to in para-
2 graph (7); and

3 (9) includes—

4 (A) a binding commitment from the State
5 in which the county is located to provide the
6 county with \$10 (from funds not provided by
7 the Federal Government) to carry out the plan
8 for each \$85 in funds provided to the county
9 under this Act to carry out the plan; and

10 (B) a binding commitment from the county
11 that the county will, alone or in combination
12 with one or more local units of government in
13 the county, expend a total of \$5 (from funds
14 not provided by the Federal Government) for
15 each \$85 in funds provided to the county under
16 this Act to carry out the plan.

17 (b) APPROVAL; DISAPPROVAL.—

18 (1) APPROVAL.—The Secretary shall approve a
19 submission that meets the requirements of sub-
20 section (a) if—

21 (A) not less than 80 percent of the grants
22 to be provided to the submitter under this Act
23 would be distributed to one or more qualified
24 local units of government through a competitive

1 grant program, and the submitter would retain
2 not more than 20 percent of the grants;

3 (B) the grants would be used, in accord-
4 ance with the consolidated plan contained in the
5 submission, to purchase, construct, improve, or
6 operate essential community facilities (including
7 health care facilities; public facilities, such as
8 town halls, courthouses, airport hangers, or
9 public transportation; community support serv-
10 ices, such as workforce housing, child care cen-
11 ters, community centers, or transitional hous-
12 ing; public safety services; educational services,
13 including classroom technological moderniza-
14 tion; utility services, including environmental
15 protection services such as sewage disposal,
16 sanitation, and pollution abatement; local food
17 systems; and local amenities), purchase equip-
18 ment, and pay related project expenses, con-
19 sistent with section 5; and

20 (C) each qualified local unit of government
21 that would be receiving such a grant would en-
22 sure that each laborer and mechanic employed
23 by a contractor or subcontractor in performance
24 of construction work financed, in whole or in
25 part, by the grant would be paid wages at rates

not less than the rates prevailing on similar construction in the locality as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with subchapter IV of chapter 31 of title 40, United States Code (commonly known as the Davis-Bacon Act); and

(D) the submitter demonstrates that there is substantial community support for the plan.

(2) DISAPPROVAL.—The Secretary shall make available to the general public the reasons for the disapproval of a submission made pursuant to this section.

SEC. 4. ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall allocate the amounts made available by this Act among counties with submissions approved under section 3, in accordance a formula prescribed by the Secretary in regulations, that the Secretary determines would best allow counties to address major community development and public infrastructure challenges. In developing the formula, the Secretary shall consider the following criteria:

(1) Per capita income levels.

(2) Population growth rates.

(b) EVALUATION.—Every 2 years, the Secretary shall evaluate the effectiveness of the formula prescribed under

1 subsection (a), and revise the formula, as necessary, to
2 best enable counties to address major community develop-
3 ment and public infrastructure challenges.

4 (c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall
5 submit to the Congress a report on each formula used
6 under this section, which sets forth the formula and ex-
7 plains how allocating the amounts made available by this
8 Act best achieves the purposes of this Act.

9 **SEC. 5. LIMITATIONS; USE OF FUNDS.**

10 (a) LIMITATIONS.—A local unit of government to
11 which a grant is made under this Act may not use the
12 grant—

13 (1) to discriminate against any person on the
14 basis of race, color, sex, age, sexual orientation, or
15 national origin;

16 (2) as matching funds to receive Federal funds
17 under any other law; or

18 (3) in contravention of the requirements under
19 sections 3141 through 3144, 3146, and 3147 of title
20 40, United States Code.

21 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—A county to which funds are
22 provided under this Act for a fiscal year shall reserve 1
23 percent of the funds for administration of the funds.

1 **SEC. 6. ANNUAL ACTION REPORTS; AUDITS BY THE INSPEC-**
2 **TOR GENERAL.**

3 (a) ANNUAL ACTION REPORTS.—By the end of each
4 year for which a grant is made under this Act to a county,
5 the county shall submit to the Secretary a report that—

6 (1) identifies the development goals of the coun-
7 ty for the succeeding year;

8 (2) contains a brief summary of the actions and
9 activities to be undertaken with funds provided
10 under this Act, and identifies specific, measurable
11 goals that match the priorities identified in the plan
12 to be carried out using the funds;

13 (3) outlines the Federal and non-Federal re-
14 sources that will be used in doing so;

15 (4) details the progress made by the county in
16 achieving the goals identified as described in this
17 subsection for the preceding year; and

18 (5) includes information on the amount of the
19 grant provided to the county for the year covered by
20 the report, and details on how the money was dis-
21 tributed for each project under the plan referred to
22 in section 3.

23 (b) AUDITS BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL.—The In-
24 spector General of the Department of Agriculture shall
25 conduct periodic and random audits of the projects to
26 which funds are provided under this Act.

1 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There is authorized to be appropriated
3 \$10,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2021 and each succeeding
4 fiscal year to make grants under this Act.

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