

2022 -- S 2883

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND
BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Introduced By: Senator James Arthur Seveney

Date Introduced: April 15, 2022

Referred To: Senate Commerce

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 162

4 THE RHODE ISLAND BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

5 **42-162-1. Definitions.**

6 As used in this chapter, the following words shall have the following meanings:

7 (1) "Broadband advisory council" or "council" means the broadband advisory council
8 established pursuant to the provisions of § 42-162-3.

9 (2) "Broadband director" or "director" means the broadband coordinator designated
10 pursuant to the provisions of § 42-162-2.

11 (3) "Broadband service" means any wireline or fixed wireless technology having the
12 capacity to transmit data from or to the Internet at minimum speeds of at least one hundred (100)
13 megabits per second downstream and twenty (20) megabits per second upstream.

14 (4) "Digital literacy" means the ability to use information and communication technologies
15 to find, evaluate, create and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills;

16 (5) "Unserved" means a geographic location of the state in which there is no provider of
17 broadband internet service that offers dedicated Internet access with a capacity for transmission at
18 a consistent speed of at least twenty-five (25) megabits per second downstream and at least three

1 (3) megabits per second upstream.

2 **42-162-2. Broadband director.**

3 An employee of the commerce corporation shall be designated by the secretary of
4 commerce as the broadband director. The broadband director shall be responsible for connecting
5 and communicating with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration
6 (NTIA) and other federal agencies, as appropriate, to access federal funds for broadband
7 infrastructure deployment to unserved locations, facilitating broadband service adoption,
8 expanding digital literacy for residents experiencing economic hardship, and for future economic
9 development. The broadband director shall meet no less than quarterly with the broadband council.
10 The broadband director shall perform such other duties as assigned by the secretary of commerce.

11 **42-162-3. Broadband advisory council established.**

12 (a) There is hereby established a broadband advisory council for the purpose of performing
13 the duties enunciated in § 42-162-4.

14 (b) The council shall consist of the following nine (9) members:

15 (1) Rhode Island emergency management agency director, or designee.

16 (2) Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns executive director, or designee.

17 (3) A representative of the Boys and Girls Clubs appointed by the senate president.

18 (4) Rhode Island infrastructure bank executive director, or designee.

19 (5) Providence chamber of commerce president, or designee.

20 (6) A member of an organization representing disadvantaged communities, appointed by
21 the speaker of the house.

22 (7) A telecommunications expert appointed by the governor.

23 (8) A telecommunications expert appointed by the senate president.

24 (9) A telecommunications expert appointed by the speaker of the house.

25 (c) Members of the council shall designate a chairperson.

26 (d) Members of the council shall serve without compensation.

27 (e) Vacancies shall be appointed in the same manner as the original appointment.

28 **42-162-4. Duties and powers of broadband advisory council.**

29 (a) The council in the performance of its duties, shall do all the following:

30 (1) Advise the broadband director and develop a strategic plan that addresses the objectives
31 enumerated in § 42-162-2. The plan shall include recommendations for federal funds to be used
32 to:

33 (i) Facilitate targeted high-speed broadband infrastructure projects in unserved locations
34 through competitive requests for proposals that requires the winning bidder to contribute no more

1 than thirty percent (30%) private investment in the network construction;

2 (ii) Provide subsidized computing devices, Internet service plan support, including in-home
3 equipment, and digital literacy services to targeted populations experiencing economic hardship
4 including, but not limited to, persons eligible for the temporary assistance for needy families
5 program, the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program, the federal communications
6 commission’s affordable connectivity program, the federal communications commission’s lifeline
7 program, and those whose household includes a child who is eligible for free or reduced price
8 lunch;

9 (iii) Provide information and advice to increase education, awareness, training, access,
10 equipment, and support about available broadband adoption programs to libraries, schools, colleges
11 and universities, health care providers, and community support organizations; and

12 (iv) In consultation with the governor’s workforce board, develop a statewide curriculum
13 for advanced digital skills training to establish a talent pipeline matching job seekers and
14 historically underrepresented populations and Rhode Island employers.

15 (b) The council shall work in collaboration with the commerce corporation and other quasi-
16 public and nonprofit entities and state agencies, as appropriate, and may provide advisory assistance
17 for the purposes of addressing the objectives enumerated in § 42-162-2.

18 **42-162-5. Funding.**

19 In addition to any appropriations by the state for the council to perform its duties, the
20 broadband director, in coordination with the broadband advisory council, shall apply for and accept
21 any federal funds or grants as appropriate to perform the functions of this chapter.

22 **42-162-6. Administrative support to broadband advisory council.**

23 The commerce corporation shall be responsible for providing administrative and other
24 support services to the council.

25 **42-162-7. Meetings and reporting.**

26 The council shall meet at least quarterly and shall report at least annually on or before
27 December 31 of each year to the general assembly on its findings and recommendations to include,
28 but not limited to, recommendations for proposed legislation to further the purposes of this chapter.

29 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND
BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

1 This act would establish a development program to increase and administer the adoption
2 of broadband services for local and statewide entities, both public and private, to be funded by the
3 state appropriations and federal funds. This act would also expand broadband services to unserved
4 and underserved areas of the state.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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