SENATE BILL NO. 682

October 07, 2021, Introduced by Senator MCBROOM and referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

A bill to create the office of rural development within the department of agriculture and rural development; and to prescribe the powers and duties of the office of rural development, the deputy of the office of rural development, and certain state departments and officials.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

Sec. 1. As used in this act:
(a) "Commission" means the commission on agriculture and rural development.
(b) "Department" means the department of agriculture and rural development.
development.

(c) "Director" means the director of the department.

(d) "Office" means the office of rural development created under section 3.

Sec. 3. (1) The office of rural development is created within the department.

(2) The office shall provide the director and the executive office with counsel and perspective on the impact of current laws and legislation, executive orders, policies, regulations, rules, and spending. The office shall assist other state departments and agencies on addressing relevant issues and creating policy solutions that impact rural areas of this state.

(3) Beginning January 1, 2023, the deputy of the office shall be appointed by the director from a list of 5 individuals selected by the commission who are qualified by training and experience to perform the duties and exercise the powers of the office and the deputy of the office. The deputy of the office will be the primary liaison for rural development in this state and will oversee the office. The individual appointed as deputy of the office under this subsection must meet the following criteria:

(a) Have substantial knowledge of and experience with issues of primary importance to rural areas of this state, including, but not limited to, economic development and infrastructure.

(b) Be skilled in collaboration, project management, and intergovernmental affairs.

(c) Be knowledgeable in federal, state, private sector, nonprofit, foundation, and other grant and loans programs and opportunities.

Sec. 5. The deputy of the office shall establish procedures
for the office for budgeting, expending money, and employing
personnel according to the management and budget act, 1984 PA 431,
MCL 18.1101 to 18.1594.

Sec. 7. The office shall do all of the following:
(a) Evaluate, analyze, and address the ramifications of
population and demographic trends in rural areas of this state.
(b) Work with the commission, department, and governor's
office to identify existing state and federal policies that impact
rural areas and create new policy goals.
(c) Analyze and provide guidance on education-related issues
and the effects on rural communities, students, schools, and
economies.
(d) Collaborate and coordinate with various state departments
and agencies to address critical issues that impact rural
development in this state.
(e) Evaluate energy and communication in rural areas of this
state and analyze how energy and communication issues are impacting
the livability, local economies, and opportunities in rural areas
of this state.
(f) Improve access to existing resources for rural
municipalities and economic development organizations.
(g) Engage stakeholders from across this state to provide for
better collaboration and idea sharing.
(h) Streamline access to state and federal resources for rural
development.
(i) Provide assistance to rural communities in applying for
state and federal grants.
(j) Engage with local governments, businesses, and economic
development groups in rural areas.
(k) Identify new opportunities to create programs and incentives to support rural businesses.

(l) Coordinate with the department's tribal liaison and tribal leaders in this state.

(m) Work with the department's agriculture development division to implement funding and oversight for rural development grants and assist communities and organizations in applying for rural development grants.