



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Representative Bryce Edgmon

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Sponsor Statement:

CSHB 363(FIN) Broadband: Office, Grants, Parity

“An Act establishing the office of broadband; creating the broadband parity adjustment fund; establishing the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board; and providing for an effective date.”

Last May, Gov. Dunleavy issued Administrative Order No. 322, establishing the Task Force on Broadband to develop policy objectives and steps necessary to prepare Alaska for a massive infusion of federal money through the federal Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA). The goal of the task force recommendations and IIJA is to move Alaska into the 21st century for broadband, and provide for essential services by creating the opportunity for communities to do things like routine two-way video conferencing, advanced telemedicine and educational opportunities, public safety improvements, and economic development.

House Bill 363 is written directly from the task force recommendations and as enabling legislation does three things: creates a broadband office, establishes a Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund, and forms a Statewide Broadband Advisory Board.

To be eligible for federal funding each state must establish a broadband office. In consultation with the administration, it was decided that the office would be housed in the Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED). It will initially contain three staff and will focus during the first year on planning activities and working with the FCC to complete the mapping process for the state. In alignment with IIJA, as times goes on, the office will prioritize broadband service expansion in the following priority order: **unserved areas, underserved areas, and anchor institutions.**

The Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund is a separate fund in the state treasury to be a repository of federal funds for the purposes of deploying high quality, affordable broadband across the Alaska. The Office may develop a program in the Fund to directly offset the costs of broadband for eligible consumers.

Finally, HB 363 creates the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board advise to the Office of Broadband and to facilitate statewide stakeholder engagement. The Board is composed of nine public members appointed by the Governor, two ex-officio legislative members, and the Commissioners of DCCED and the Dept. of Education & Early Development (DEED). The Board shall create a technical working group to provide recommendations to the Board comprised of members who have expertise in the different technologies that provide broadband service and who manage and deliver broadband projects in Alaska.