

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to farming community high-speed  
 3           broadband development incentives; creating s.  
 4           288.9964, F.S.; providing a short title; providing  
 5           legislative findings; providing definitions; creating  
 6           a state-funded grant program within the Florida Office  
 7           of Broadband to fund broadband infrastructure projects  
 8           in underserved farming communities; providing  
 9           eligibility criteria; specifying limits on annual  
 10          funding; requiring funding recipients to providing  
 11          annual progress reports containing specified  
 12          information; requiring the office to conduct  
 13          performance audits; authorizing farmers in underserved  
 14          farming communities to receive specified tax credits  
 15          if certain conditions are met; specifying projects  
 16          eligible for tax credits; requiring the office to  
 17          conduct specified public awareness campaigns and  
 18          provide technical training programs; providing an  
 19          expiration date; providing an effective date.

20  
 21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

22  
 23           **Section 1. Section 288.9964, Florida Statutes, is created**  
 24 **to read:**

25           288.9964 Internet connectivity in underserved farming

26 communities.-

27 (1) This section may be cited as the "Farming Community  
 28 Connectivity Innovation Act."

29 (2) The Legislature finds that:

30 (a) Access to high-speed broadband Internet service is  
 31 essential for agricultural operations as well as rural economic  
 32 development.

33 (b) Underserved farming communities face significant  
 34 challenges due to limited access to broadband Internet service.

35 (c) Public-private partnerships and targeted incentives  
 36 can drive innovation and improve connectivity in rural areas.

37 (3) For purposes of this section, the term:

38 (a) "Broadband-enabled technologies" means digital tools  
 39 and systems used in agriculture, including precision farming,  
 40 smart irrigation, and automated machinery.

41 (b) "Broadband infrastructure project" means a project  
 42 that builds or upgrades the necessary physical network  
 43 infrastructure to deliver broadband services in a defined area.

44 (c) "Eligible applicant" means a public-private  
 45 partnership, local government, or a cooperative organization  
 46 that proposes a broadband infrastructure project, which may  
 47 include broadband-enabled technologies.

48 (d) "Underserved farming community" means a farming area  
 49 with limited or no access to high-speed broadband Internet  
 50 services.

51 (4) (a) There is created within the Florida Office of  
52 Broadband, a state-funded grant program. The purpose of the  
53 grant program is to fund broadband infrastructure projects in  
54 underserved farming communities.

55 1. To be eligible to receive grant funds, an eligible  
56 applicant must demonstrate a commitment to serving underserved  
57 farming communities and must outline a plan for maintaining  
58 existing infrastructure.

59 2. The office must give funding priority to public-private  
60 partnerships and cooperative organizations.

61 3. Total funding for the grant program may not exceed \$50  
62 million annually.

63 (b) Recipients under the state-funded grant program must  
64 submit annual progress reports detailing project milestones,  
65 expenditures, and broadband access improvements.

66 (c) The office must conduct performance audits to ensure  
67 funds are used effectively and equitably.

68 (5) (a) A farmer in an underserved farming community who  
69 purchases, installs, or maintains broadband-enabled technologies  
70 may receive state tax credits of up to \$10,000 annually.

71 (b) Eligible expenses include the purchase, installation,  
72 and maintenance of agricultural equipment that incorporate  
73 broadband-enabled technologies.

74 (6) The office must:

75 (a) Conduct public awareness campaigns to inform rural

76 communities about grant opportunities and inform farmers in  
77 underserved farming communities about the tax credits.

78 (b) Provide technical training programs to help farmers  
79 adopt and use broadband-enabled technologies.

80 (7) This section shall remain in effect until December 31,  
81 2030, unless extended or amended by the Legislature.

82 **Section 2.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.