

MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2024 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2023 funding levels. USDA Rural Development programs provide critical investments in key rural county priorities.

BACKGROUND:

USDA programs are funded through the annual Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.

In December 2022, Congress passed the FY 2023 spending package that included \$25.5 billion in total discretionary funding authority for USDA, an increase of \$400 million above FY 2022 funding levels. This includes over \$3.9 billion in discretionary funding for USDA's Rural Development Programs.

Counties encourage Congress to maintain funding levels at or above FY 2023 levels as it considers appropriations for FY 2024.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS:

Below is a breakdown of FY 2023 funding levels for Rural Development Programs:

Under the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS):

- **Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Programs:** \$1.47 billion in funding for the Water and Waste Disposal Program – and \$50 million in grants for the Water and Waste Disposal Program. This program helps rural communities address the backlog of clean water and waste disposal projects.

USDA PROGRAMS ARE FUNDED THROUGH THE ANNUAL AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL.

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT OPERATES PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE GRANTS AND LOAN FINANCING FOR WATER/WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNITY FACILITIES, BROADBAND, ELECTRIC, TELEPHONE, HOUSING, RENEWABLE ENERGY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

SOME KEY USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS INCLUDE THE USDA RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE (RUS); THE USDA RURAL HOUSING SERVICE (RHS); AND THE RURAL BUSINESS-COOPERATIVE SERVICE (RBCS).

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- **Rural Broadband:** \$690 million for the Rural Telecommunications Program, equal to FY 2022 enacted levels. This funding includes \$364 million for the ReConnect Program and \$60 million in grant funding for the Distance Learning, Telemedicine and Broadband Program. These programs help extend internet access to underserved rural communities.

Under the USDA Rural Housing Service (RHS):

- **Rural Community Facilities Program:** \$3.45 billion in direct and guaranteed loans for the Rural Community Facilities Program, equal to FY 2022 enacted levels. This program helps fund rural hospitals, schools, and health clinics.
- **Rural Housing Rental Assistance Program:** \$1.49 billion for Rural Housing Rental Assistance Programs. This program helps provide affordable housing to low-income and elderly households in rural communities.

Under the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS):

- **Rural Business Development Program:** \$86.5 million for the Rural Business Development Grant Program, equal to enacted FY 2022 levels. The FY 2023 package also provided \$28.3 million for Rural Cooperative Development Grants. These programs support rural entrepreneurs and help rural communities create and expand new market opportunities through strategic investments.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs that are critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.
- Urge your member of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2024 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2023 funding levels.

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