



DAILY BRIEF

For the 2019 Legislative Session

From March 27, 2019

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SB 596 – Relating to Regional Rural Development Grants

On Wednesday, March 27, **SB 596** by Senator Ben Albritton (R-Bartow) was heard before the Senate Appropriations Committee and was reported favorably with 21 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF stood in support of this legislation.**

The bill makes changes to how the Regional Rural Development Grant program and the Rural Infrastructure Fund operate. Specifically, the bill amends the Regional Rural Development Grant Program to:

- Increase the maximum annual grant amount to \$250,000 from \$150,000 that three regional economic development organizations that serve the entire region of a rural area of opportunity may receive;
- Increase the amount of funds the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) may expend for the program to up to \$1 million annually (from up to \$750,000 annually);
- Reduce the required match the regional economic development organizations must contribute in non-state resources from 100 percent to 25 percent of the state's contribution; and
- Allow the use of grant funds to build the professional capacity of regional economic development organizations. The bill amends the Rural Infrastructure Fund program to:
 - Increase the grant awards to 50 percent of infrastructure project costs (up from 30 percent);
 - Clarify that eligible infrastructure projects include access to broadband Internet service, and projects that improve service and access must be through a partnership that was publicly noticed and competitively bid; and
 - Require the DEO to review the grant program application and award procedures by September 1, 2020.

SB 596 will now move to the Senate floor.

AIF supports efforts to increase economic development in Florida's rural areas by increasing job growth.