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

Section 1. Present subsection (5) of section 288.9961, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (7), and a new subsection (5) and subsection (6) are added to that section, to read:

288.9961 Promotion of broadband adoption; Florida Office of Broadband.—

(5) BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT TASK FORCE.—The Broadband Deployment Task Force, a task force as defined in s. 20.03(8), is established within the department to support and provide
recommendations to the office for the deployment of broadband Internet service throughout this state, including, but not limited to, rural buildout and urban adoption strategies. The department shall provide administrative and technical assistance to the task force in the performance of its duties. The task force shall operate in a manner consistent with s. 20.052.

(a) The task force shall be composed of the following members, who must be appointed by September 1, 2022, and who must have an interest and significant expertise in broadband Internet services:

1. One member from each of the following state agencies, who shall be appointed by his or her agency head: the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Management Services, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the Office of Technology and Information Services.

2. One member from the Florida Association of Counties as a representative of underserved or unserved rural communities, who is recommended by the association and appointed by the executive director.

3. One member from the Florida League of Cities as a representative of underserved or unserved rural communities, who is recommended by the league and appointed by the executive director.

4. Two members of the public who are appointed by the Governor, including one member who resides in an underserved area of this state and one member who resides in an unserved area of this state.

5. One member from each of the following segments of the
broadband industry, who shall be appointed by the Governor: a wireless provider, a wireline provider, a broadband satellite provider, a cable provider, a rural local exchange carrier, and a competitive local exchange carrier.

(b) Any vacancy on the task force must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(c) The task force shall do all of the following:

1. Identify any available federal funding sources for the expansion or improvement of broadband Internet services in this state.

2. Identify any gaps in broadband Internet service coverage for any area of this state.

3. Develop strategies to expand broadband Internet service to any area of this state designated as a rural area of opportunity, including, but not limited to, methods of building partnerships with local governments, other state and federal entities, electric utilities, the business community, and the public to support broadband Internet service in such areas.

4. Develop an urban adoption strategy to address areas of this state which have broadband Internet service, but where such service is not affordable.

5. Identify specific projects that will accomplish the deployment of broadband Internet service throughout this state, including grants provided through the Rural Infrastructure Fund pursuant to s. 288.0655(2)(b).

6. Coordinate with the Cabinet, state agencies, and other governmental entities with oversight in broadband Internet activities or potential funding opportunities.

7. Recommend outreach strategies and partnerships for

(d) The task force shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 30, 2023, and annually thereafter.

(6) CONFIDENTIALITY.—Any information that is confidential or exempt from public disclosure under chapter 119 when in the possession of the department retains its status as confidential or exempt from disclosure under chapter 119 when provided by a broadband service provider under this section.

Section 2. Subsection (4) and paragraph (c) of subsection (6) of section 288.9962, Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraph (e) is added to subsection (8) of that section, to read:

288.9962 Broadband Opportunity Program.—

(4) The office may not award, directly or indirectly, grants under this section to a governmental entity or an educational institution or affiliate to provide broadband Internet service to any residential or commercial premises, unless other broadband Internet service providers have not deployed service to an unserved area. This subsection applies only to grants awarded using state funds. A grant awarded using federal funds must meet the applicable federal terms, guidelines, and criteria for the use of such funds.

(6)

(c) A broadband Internet service provider that provides existing service in or adjacent to a proposed project area may
submit to the office, within 45 days after publication of the information under paragraph (b), a written challenge to an application. The challenge shall contain information demonstrating that:

1. The provider currently has deployed broadband Internet service to retail customers within the project area;

2. The provider has begun construction to provide broadband Internet service to retail customers within the proposed project area within the timeframe proposed by the applicant; or

3. The provider commits to providing broadband Internet service to retail customers within the proposed project area within the timeframe proposed by the applicant.

(e) This subsection applies only to grants awarded using state funds. A grant awarded using federal funds must meet the applicable federal terms, guidelines, and criteria for the use of such funds.

Section 3. Seven full-time equivalent positions are established within the Office of Broadband within the Department of Economic Opportunity to support the office, implement a broadband availability and access strategic plan, implement federal broadband grant programs, maintain updated geographic information system maps of broadband Internet service availability throughout this state, and provide administrative support for the Broadband Deployment Task Force pursuant to s. 288.9961, Florida Statutes.

Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.