

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009

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HOUSE BILL 1324*

Short Title: WOW e-CDC/Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Spear, Bryant, Mobley (Primary Sponsors); Faison and Wray.

Referred to: Appropriations.

April 9, 2009

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO WOW E-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION TO CONTINUE AS THE DESIGNATED TECHNOLOGY RESOURCE CENTER FOR GRASSROOTS EFFORTS IN SOME OF THE STATE'S NORTHEASTERN COUNTIES AND TO SUPPORT AND MENTOR SIMILAR EFFORTS IN SOME WESTERN COUNTIES.

Whereas, northeastern North Carolina is the State's most economically distressed region with 11 Tier 1 counties, over 30 municipalities that have less than 1,500 people, and many communities that need assistance to participate in the State's technology driven economy; and

Whereas, many of the communities in northeastern and western North Carolina do not have the resources to address technology issues, including digital literacy and the availability of affordable broadband; and

Whereas, many of these communities lack public access to computers and the Internet because of the absence of broadband infrastructure; and

Whereas, the lack of broadband, public access to computers and the Internet, and the lack of assistance to address technology-related issues negatively impacts education, economic development, and the quality of life in northeastern North Carolina; and

Whereas, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will make federal funding available through direct grants from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to eligible organizations for broadband deployment, public access to computers, and digital literacy, and to grassroots technology centers; and

Whereas, Windows on the World e-Community Development Corporation (WOW e-CDC) has been involved in efforts to provide access to computers, the Internet, and affordable broadband in underserved areas of the State, including: (i) distributing surplus computers to schools, faith-based organizations, and low-wealth families in northeastern North Carolina; (ii) completing the only independent, verifiable, and transparent 21-county broadband accessibility study in the State; (iii) developing an online news service for and about northeastern North Carolina; (iv) developing public access points in several communities where there is available broadband infrastructure; and (v) applying for and receiving a \$100,000 USDA grant for the purpose of establishing broadband in critical facilities in four northeastern counties; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Commerce the sum of five hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$550,000) for the 2009-2010 fiscal year and the sum of five hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$550,000) for the 2010-2011 fiscal year for WOW e-CDC. The funds shall be used by WOW e-CDC as follows:



- 1 1. \$200,000 for operation of the Windows on the World Technology Center.
- 2 2. \$200,000 for providing technical assistance to eligible applicants in
- 3 northeastern North Carolina applying for federal grant funds under the
- 4 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to provide greater access to and
- 5 use of broadband technology; acquisition and distribution of surplus
- 6 computers in low-wealth communities; operation of the online news service
- 7 for and about northeastern North Carolina; providing a site for distance
- 8 learning; and supporting efforts of the WOW West Technology Resource
- 9 Center.
- 10 3. \$50,000 for operation of the WOW e-CDC Internet service provider.
- 11 4. \$100,000 to fund the activities of WOW e-WEST, which provides
- 12 technology resource services to Yancey, Madison, Avery, Mitchell, and
- 13 McDowell Counties, including providing technical assistance for eligible
- 14 applicants in these counties; establishing a western North Carolina
- 15 Technology Resource Center; establishing public access points for using
- 16 computers and broadband technology in western North Carolina; providing a
- 17 site for distance learning; and distributing surplus computers within the
- 18 counties.

19 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2009.