

House Bill 856

By: Representatives Schofield of the 60th, Scott of the 76th, Davis of the 87th, Burnough of the 77th, Park of the 101st, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 1 of Title 28 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 general provisions regarding the General Assembly, so as to provide for the establishment
3 of the Legislative Commission on the Disparate Impact of COVID-19; to provide for a
4 definition; to provide for membership, appointments, vacancies, chairperson, quorum, and
5 expenses; to provide for powers and duties; to provide for a report; to provide for automatic
6 repeal; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 Chapter 1 of Title 28 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general
10 provisions regarding the General Assembly, is amended by adding a new Code section to
11 read as follows:

12 "28-1-18.

13 (a) As used in this Code section, the term 'COVID-19' means severe acute respiratory
14 syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), and any mutation or viral fragments thereof, or
15 any disease or condition caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2

16 (SARS-CoV-2), which were the subject of the public health state of emergency declared
17 by the Governor on March 14, 2020.

18 (b) There is established the Legislative Commission on the Disparate Impact of
19 COVID-19. The commission shall expire on June 30, 2024, or upon a two-thirds' vote of
20 the membership of the commission, whichever is earlier.

21 (c) The commission shall consist of 20 members as follows:

22 (1) Four members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, all of
23 whom have expertise in evaluating disparities in education, housing, and human services;

24 (2) Four members appointed by the President of the Senate, all of whom have expertise
25 in evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on essential workers;

26 (3) Three members appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives,
27 two of whom have expertise in public health and infectious diseases and one of whom
28 shall be a teacher;

29 (4) Three members appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, two of whom have
30 expertise in small business and one of whom shall be a housing advocate;

31 (5) Three members appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives,
32 two of whom have expertise in nursing homes and one of whom shall be a representative
33 of higher education; and

34 (6) Three members appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, two of whom have
35 expertise in health care delivery and one of whom has expertise in the hospitality
36 industry.

37 (d) Any member of the commission appointed pursuant to subsection (c) of this Code
38 section may be a member of the General Assembly.

39 (e) All initial appointments to the commission shall be made not later than September 1,
40 2022.

41 (f) The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate shall
42 jointly select the chairperson of the commission from among the members of the

43 commission. Such chairperson shall schedule the first meeting of the commission, which
44 shall be held not later than September 1, 2022.

45 (g) Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing individual.

46 (h) A majority of the commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any
47 business.

48 (i) Members of the commission shall serve without compensation but shall receive the
49 same expense allowance per day as that received by a member of the General Assembly
50 for each day such member of the commission is in attendance at a meeting of such
51 commission, plus either reimbursement for actual transportation costs while traveling by
52 public carrier or the same mileage allowance for use of a personal car in connection with
53 such attendance as members of the General Assembly receive. Such expense and travel
54 allowance shall be paid in lieu of any per diem, allowance, or other remuneration now
55 received by any such member for such attendance.

56 (j) The commission shall have the following powers and duties:

57 (1) To analyze any disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different racial,
58 ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups in the state;

59 (2) To identify the causes for such disparate impact;

60 (3) To assess the effects of federal and state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic on
61 such disparate impact;

62 (4) To appoint and convene at least two working groups to analyze the impact of the
63 COVID-19 pandemic, one to focus on the pandemic's impact on education, housing, and
64 human services needs and another to focus on the pandemic's impact on labor, commerce,
65 and public health needs;

66 (5) To hold one or more public hearings as necessary to carry out the purposes of this
67 Code section;

68 (6) To request from any executive department, board, commission, or other agency of
69 this state such assistance and data as necessary, reasonable, and available to carry out the
70 purposes of this Code section;

71 (7) To accept any gift, donation, or bequest for the purpose of performing the duties
72 described in this Code section;

73 (8) To establish bylaws to govern its procedures; and

74 (9) To perform other such acts as may be necessary and appropriate to carry out the
75 duties described in this subsection.

76 (k) The commission shall meet as often as deemed necessary by the chairperson.

77 (l) Not later than January 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, the commission shall submit
78 a report to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the
79 Senate, the majority leader of the House of Representatives, the majority leader of the
80 Senate, the minority leader of the House of Representatives, and the minority leader of the
81 Senate on: (1) the results of the commission's analysis pursuant to subsection (j) of this
82 Code section; and (2) recommendations for policy changes and amendments to the general
83 statutes necessary to address the causes for any disparate impact of the COVID-19
84 pandemic and to improve outcomes during any future pandemic.

85 (m) This Code section shall stand repealed by operation of law on June 30, 2024."

86 **SECTION 2.**

87 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.