

Senate Bill 235

By: Senators Halpern of the 39th, Anavitarte of the 31st, Seay of the 34th and Orrock of the 36th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 8 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the
2 Department of Community Affairs, so as to create the HBCU Innovation and Economic
3 Prosperity Planning Districts Commission; to provide for membership and operation; to
4 provide for an executive director; to provide for advisory committees; to provide for powers
5 and duties; to provide that the commission may accept outside funding from public or private
6 grants, devises, and bequests; to provide for reporting; to provide for a short title; to provide
7 for legislative findings; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for
8 other purposes.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

10 **SECTION 1.**

11 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "HBCU Innovation and Economic
12 Prosperity Planning Districts Act."

13

SECTION 2.

14 The General Assembly finds that:

15 (1) From their inception, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have served
16 as anchor institutions in their communities;17 (2) The importance of HBCUs extends beyond the students they educate, as they
18 contribute substantially to economic growth and continually work to improve the economic
19 health of the neighborhoods surrounding the campus;20 (3) HBCU planning districts can transform these institutions and surrounding communities
21 in numerous ways related to housing, digital infrastructure, small business development,
22 environmental upgrades, campus upgrades, economic development, and workforce
23 development;24 (4) In these planning districts, city, county, state, and federal governments, as well as
25 private and philanthropic interests, can leverage their resources to support innovation,
26 technology, and entrepreneurship at HBCUs and modernize their campuses and the
27 surrounding communities;28 (5) It is the policy of the General Assembly that the government should create planning
29 districts and study best practices to implement this innovative approach through ongoing
30 community engagement; and31 (6) A thorough, intensive, and systematic study of state policies and potential legislation
32 is necessary and appropriate to facilitate the creation of such planning districts in this state.

33

SECTION 3.34 Chapter 8 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Department
35 of Community Affairs, is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:

36

"ARTICLE 1437 50-8-320.

38 (a) There is created the HBCU Innovation and Economic Prosperity Planning Districts
39 Commission. The commission shall be composed of 11 members to be appointed as
40 follows:

41 (1) Three members shall be appointed by Governor;42 (2) Two members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;43 (3) Two members shall be appointed by the President of the Senate;44 (4) Two members shall be appointed by the minority leader of the House of
45 Representatives; and46 (5) Two members shall be appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

47 (b) The members of the commission shall be individuals of recognized ability and
48 achievement with knowledge and experience in matters pertaining to historically black
49 colleges and universities (HBCUs) and economic and community development. At least
50 two members of the commission shall be current HBCU presidents, and at least one
51 member of the commission shall be a member of a community that houses an HBCU.

52 (c) All vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term by the original appointing official.
53 Members shall serve for terms of four years and shall be eligible for successive
54 appointments by the appointing official. Any member with four consecutive unexcused
55 absences from regular monthly meetings may be removed from the commission by the
56 appointing official. Each person appointed to the commission shall be a full-time resident
57 of Georgia. Any member who ceases to be a full-time resident of this state during the term
58 of his or her membership shall be removed from the commission and such vacancy shall
59 be filled by appointment by the Governor. Any member may be removed from office by
60 the appointing official when the actions or condition of that member are considered to be
61 good cause for removal.

62 (d) The commission shall be assigned to the Department of Community Affairs for
63 administrative purposes only, as prescribed in Code Section 50-4-3.

64 50-8-321.

65 (a) The commission shall elect a chairperson, a vice chairperson, and a secretary from
66 among its members annually, and any member shall be eligible for successive election to
67 such office by the commission.

68 (b) A quorum for transacting business shall be a majority of the members of the
69 commission.

70 (c) Members of the commission shall serve without compensation but shall be eligible to
71 receive reimbursement for mileage and other expenses actually incurred in performance
72 of their duties in accordance with the rates and standards for reimbursement of state
73 employees.

74 (d) The commission shall employ an executive director who shall manage the work of the
75 commission. The commission may delegate to such executive director the powers and
76 duties it deems proper.

77 (e) The commission shall provide oversight, guidance, and leadership for the planning
78 district advisory committees established pursuant to Code Section 50-8-322.

79 50-8-322.

80 (a)(1) The commission shall establish an advisory committee for each of the following
81 planning districts:

82 (A) The Albany State University planning district;

83 (B) The Atlanta University Center Consortium planning district;

84 (C) The Fort Valley State University planning district;

85 (D) The Paine College planning district; and

86 (E) The Savannah State University planning district.

- 87 (2) The commission shall appoint HBCU presidents or other HBCU leaders, local
88 community leaders, and other stakeholders as members of each advisory committee.
- 89 (b) Each advisory committee shall have the following powers and duties:
- 90 (1) To undertake a study of the conditions, needs, issues, and problems related to
91 fostering economic and community development in communities surrounding the
92 planning district;
- 93 (2) To review and analyze the laws of the State of Georgia and the United States and
94 their impact on economic and community development in communities surrounding the
95 planning district;
- 96 (3) To initiate research, execute initiatives, recommend policies, and propose legislation
97 to further economic and community development in communities surrounding the
98 planning district;
- 99 (4) To collect and disseminate information regarding the status of economic and
100 community development in communities surrounding the planning district;
- 101 (5) To consult with and advise the Governor and any state department, agency, board,
102 commission, or authority on matters pertaining to economic and community development
103 in communities surrounding the planning district;
- 104 (6) To cooperate with the government of the United States and the governments of other
105 states in programs relating to economic and community development in communities
106 surrounding the planning district;
- 107 (7) To accept public or private grants, including philanthropic funds, devises, and
108 bequests; and
- 109 (8) To hold public hearings, conduct studies, or take any other action the committee
110 deems necessary to fulfill its responsibilities.
- 111 (c) The commission shall be authorized to enter into all contracts or agreements necessary
112 or incidental to the performance of its duties.

113 (d) All executive departments, agencies, boards, commissions, and authorities shall
114 cooperate with the commission and the advisory committees in the performance of their
115 duties.

116 50-8-323.

117 The commission is authorized to solicit and accept donations, contributions, grants,
118 devises, bequests, gifts of money and property, facilities, or services, with or without
119 consideration, from any person, firm, or corporation or from any state, county, municipal
120 corporation, or local government or governing body to enable it to carry out its functions
121 and purpose. The commission is prohibited from paying or compensating any member of
122 the General Assembly, directly or indirectly, any amount in excess of expenses.

123 50-8-324.

124 On the first Monday after January 1 of each year, the commission shall post electronically
125 on the Department of Community Affairs internet website an annual report summarizing
126 the activities, findings, and recommendations of each advisory committee. Such report
127 shall also be submitted to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the
128 President of the Senate, and all members of the House of Representatives and the Senate."

129

SECTION 4.

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