

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 277 Session of 2023

INTRODUCED BY YAW, STEFANO, BAKER AND VOGEL, JANUARY 31, 2023

AS AMENDED ON SECOND CONSIDERATION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 7, 2024

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of June 30, 1987 (P.L.163, No.16), entitled "An
2 act providing for the revitalization of rural Pennsylvania;
3 establishing the Center for Rural Pennsylvania; providing for
4 rural education partnerships and adult literacy programs;
5 allocating funds appropriated to the Department of Commerce
6 for a Regional Center for Continuing Education of Health
7 Science Practitioners in western Pennsylvania; making
8 appropriations; and making a repeal," in Center for Rural
9 Pennsylvania, further providing for board of directors;
10 ESTABLISHING THE RURAL POPULATION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION <--
11 AND PROVIDING FOR DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION; and making a
12 repeal.

13 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
14 hereby enacts as follows:

15 Section 1. Section 302(a) of the act of June 30, 1987
16 (P.L.163, No.16), known as the Rural Pennsylvania Revitalization
17 Act, is amended to read:

18 Section 302. Board of directors.

19 (a) Members.--The Center for Rural Pennsylvania shall be
20 governed by a board of directors which shall consist of [11
21 members.] members appointed as follows:

22 (1) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall

1 appoint two members from the House of Representatives, one  
2 from the majority party and one from the minority party.

3 (2) The President pro tempore of the Senate shall  
4 appoint two members from the Senate, one from the majority  
5 party and one from the minority party.

6 (3) Two members shall be representatives of universities  
7 in the State System of Higher Education. [One member]

8 (4) Two members shall be from The Pennsylvania State  
9 University[.], one of whom shall be from Penn State  
10 Extension.

11 (5) One member shall be from the University of  
12 Pittsburgh. [One member shall be the Director of the  
13 Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development.]

14 (6) The Governor shall appoint two members from among  
15 the memberships of the following Statewide organizations:  
16 Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, Pennsylvania [Grange  
17 Association] State Grange and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

18 (7) One member shall be from the Northern Pennsylvania  
19 Regional College.

20 (8) One member shall be from the Pennsylvania College of  
21 Technology.

22 \* \* \*

23 SECTION 1.1. THE ACT IS AMENDED BY ADDING A CHAPTER TO READ: <--

24 CHAPTER 4

25 RURAL POPULATION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

26 SECTION 401. SCOPE OF CHAPTER.

27 THIS CHAPTER RELATES TO THE RURAL POPULATION REVITALIZATION  
28 COMMISSION.

29 SECTION 402. DEFINITIONS.

30 THE FOLLOWING WORDS AND PHRASES WHEN USED IN THIS ACT SHALL

1 HAVE THE MEANINGS GIVEN TO THEM IN THIS SECTION UNLESS THE  
2 CONTEXT CLEARLY INDICATES OTHERWISE:

3 "COMMISSION." THE RURAL POPULATION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION  
4 ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 403.

5 "RURAL COUNTY." A COUNTY LOCATED IN THIS COMMONWEALTH WITH A  
6 POPULATION DENSITY LESS THAN 291 PEOPLE PER SQUARE MILE, OR AS  
7 OTHERWISE DEFINED BY THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA.

8 "RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT." A PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT LOCATED IN  
9 THIS COMMONWEALTH WITH A POPULATION DENSITY LESS THAN 291 PEOPLE  
10 PER SQUARE MILE, OR AS OTHERWISE DEFINED BY THE CENTER FOR RURAL  
11 PENNSYLVANIA.

12 SECTION 403. ESTABLISHMENT.

13 THE RURAL POPULATION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION IS  
14 ESTABLISHED.

15 SECTION 404. DUTIES.

16 (A) REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.--AFTER ISSUING AN INITIAL  
17 REPORT UNDER SUBSECTION(B) (12), THE COMMISSION SHALL ISSUE A  
18 BIENNIAL REPORT ON POPULATION CHANGE IN RURAL AREAS OF THIS  
19 COMMONWEALTH WHICH SHALL INCLUDE REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
20 AIMED AT ATTRACTING AND RETAINING RESIDENTS IN RURAL  
21 PENNSYLVANIA WHILE ADDRESSING CHALLENGES FACING RURAL  
22 COMMUNITIES DUE TO POPULATION SHIFTS AND CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS.  
23 REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SHALL INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED  
24 TO, THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

25 (1) INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE FEDERAL DECENNIAL  
26 CENSUS.

27 (2) ATTRACTING AND RETAINING RESIDENTS IN RURAL  
28 PENNSYLVANIA.

29 (3) EDUCATION AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES.

30 (4) ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

- 1           (5) AFFORDABLE HOUSING.
- 2           (6) ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES.
- 3           (7) CURRENT ISSUES FACING RURAL PENNSYLVANIA.
- 4           (8) GRANT AWARDS AND TAX CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL  
5 PENNSYLVANIA RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES.
- 6           (9) STATUTORY AND REGULATORY COSTS AND IMPACTS ON RURAL  
7 MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES.
- 8           (10) OTHER ISSUES FACING RURAL PENNSYLVANIA AS  
9 IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMISSION.
- 10          (B) ADDITIONAL POWERS AND DUTIES.--THE COMMISSION SHALL HAVE  
11 THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POWERS AND DUTIES:
- 12           (1) REVIEW, MAKE FINDINGS AND OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS  
13 RELATED TO ADDRESSING AND MITIGATING RURAL POPULATION SHIFTS  
14 IN THIS COMMONWEALTH.
- 15           (2) CONSULT WITH AND UTILIZE EXPERTS TO ASSIST THE  
16 COMMISSION IN CARRYING OUT THE DUTIES UNDER THIS SUBSECTION.
- 17           (3) RECEIVE INPUT FROM INTERESTED PARTIES.
- 18           (4) HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS IN DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THIS  
19 COMMONWEALTH. VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARINGS MAY BE UTILIZED BY THE  
20 COMMISSION.
- 21           (5) REVIEW AND CONSIDER RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES  
22 UTILIZED THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.
- 23           (6) REVIEW THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF STATE AND  
24 REGIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO  
25 IMPLEMENT NEW POLICIES, STATUTES AND REGULATIONS ON IMPROVING  
26 QUALITY OF LIFE AND ATTRACTING RESIDENTS TO RURAL  
27 COMMUNITIES.
- 28           (7) RECOMMEND PROPOSED LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY  
29 CHANGES BASED ON THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS.
- 30           (8) CREATE AND MAINTAIN A DATABASE ON RURAL

1 PENNSYLVANIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS AND TRENDS.

2 (9) ESTABLISH SUBCOMMITTEES, INCLUDING NONCOMMISSION  
3 MEMBERS SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE CHAIRPERSON, TO  
4 ADDRESS SPECIFIC POPULATION CHANGE ISSUES.

5 (10) PROVIDE PERIODIC ESTIMATES ON THE FISCAL IMPACT OF  
6 POPULATION CHANGES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, SUCH AS PROJECTED  
7 CHANGES IN TAX REVENUE RESULTING FROM POPULATION CHANGES.

8 (11) COLLECT AND DISTRIBUTE INFORMATION ABOUT AVAILABLE  
9 PUBLIC GRANTS, SERVICES AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO RURAL  
10 COMMUNITIES.

11 (12) NOT LATER THAN 90 DAYS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF  
12 THIS PARAGRAPH THE COMMISSION SHALL CONVENE ITS FIRST MEETING  
13 UNDER SECTION 406 AND NO LATER THAN TWO YEARS AFTER THE FIRST  
14 MEETING THE COMMISSION SHALL TRANSMIT AN INITIAL REPORT OF  
15 THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE  
16 FOLLOWING:

17 (I) THE GOVERNOR.

18 (II) ALL MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF  
19 REPRESENTATIVES.

20 (III) THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA'S PUBLICLY  
21 ACCESSIBLE INTERNET WEBSITE.

22 SECTION 405. MEMBERSHIP.

23 (A) MEMBERS.--THE COMMISSION SHALL CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING  
24 MEMBERS:

25 (1) TWO INDIVIDUALS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

26 (2) TWO MEMBERS FROM THE SENATE APPOINTED BY THE  
27 PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE, ONE FROM THE MAJORITY  
28 PARTY AND ONE FROM THE MINORITY PARTY.

29 (3) TWO MEMBERS FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
30 APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ONE

1 FROM THE MAJORITY PARTY AND ONE FROM THE MINORITY PARTY.

2 (4) THE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA OR  
3 A DESIGNEE.

4 (5) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE OF  
5 RURAL HEALTH.

6 (6) A YOUNG ADULT SELECTED FROM A STATEWIDE GENERAL FARM  
7 ORGANIZATION SELECTED BY THE CHAIRPERSON.

8 (7) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
9 ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA WHO HOLDS OFFICE IN A RURAL  
10 COUNTY.

11 (8) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
12 ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA FROM A RURAL COUNTY WITH INTEREST  
13 OR EXPERIENCE IN HUMAN SERVICES.

14 (9) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL BOARDS  
15 ASSOCIATION FROM A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT.

16 (10) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA CHAMBER OF  
17 BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY WHO RESIDES IN OR OPERATES A BUSINESS  
18 IN A RURAL COUNTY.

19 (11) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
20 COUNCIL OR A DESIGNEE.

21 (12) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER  
22 EDUCATION WHO REPRESENTS A UNIVERSITY LOCATED IN A RURAL  
23 COUNTY.

24 (B) CHAIRPERSON.--THE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR RURAL  
25 PENNSYLVANIA SHALL SERVE AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION UNTIL  
26 THE COMMISSION ELECTS A CHAIRPERSON FROM THE MEMBERSHIP. THE  
27 MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION SHALL ELECT A VICE CHAIRPERSON FROM  
28 AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION. THE MEMBER ELECTED VICE  
29 CHAIRPERSON SHALL SERVE IN THAT CAPACITY FOR THE ENSUING TERM.

30 (C) CONSIDERATIONS.--MEMBERS APPOINTED UNDER SUBSECTION (A)

1 SHALL:

2 (1) HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF PROBLEMS FACING RURAL COMMUNITIES  
3 IN THIS COMMONWEALTH;

4 (2) HAVE EXPERIENCE IN ADVOCACY RELATING TO RURAL  
5 ISSUES; OR

6 (3) PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES THAT  
7 IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES OR ATTRACT  
8 AND RETAIN RESIDENTS IN RURAL PENNSYLVANIA.

9 (D) TERMS.--THE TERM OF OFFICE OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE  
10 COMMISSION SHALL BE TWO YEARS. EACH MEMBER SHALL BE ELIGIBLE TO  
11 BE REAPPOINTED TO THE COMMISSION.

12 SECTION 406. MEETINGS.

13 THE COMMISSION SHALL HOLD ITS FIRST MEETING WITHIN 90 DAYS OF  
14 THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS SECTION, WITH QUORUM BASED UPON THE  
15 MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN APPOINTED. THE COMMISSION  
16 SHALL HOLD MEETINGS AT THE CALL OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON NO LESS  
17 THAN FOUR DIFFERENT DATES ANNUALLY.

18 SECTION 407. EXPENSES.

19 THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION SHALL SERVE WITHOUT SALARY OR  
20 COMPENSATION, BUT SHALL BE ENTITLED TO EXPENSES THAT ARE  
21 REASONABLE AND NECESSARY TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES.

22 SECTION 408. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.

23 THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA STAFF SHALL PROVIDE  
24 ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, MEETING SPACE AND ANY OTHER ASSISTANCE  
25 REQUIRED BY THE COMMISSION TO CARRY OUT THE COMMISSION'S DUTIES  
26 UNDER THIS CHAPTER.

27 Section 2. Repeals are as follows:

28 (1) The General Assembly declares that the repeal under  
29 paragraph (2) is necessary to effectuate the addition of  
30 section 302(a) (7) and (8) of the act.

1           (2) Section 311 of the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177,  
2       No.175), known as The Administrative Code of 1929, is  
3       repealed.

4       Section 3. The addition of section 302(a)(7) and (8) of the  
5       act is a continuation of section 311 of the act of April 9, 1929  
6       (P.L.177, No.175), known as The Administrative Code of 1929.  
7       Except as otherwise provided in the addition of section 302(a)  
8       (7) or (8) of the act, all activities initiated under section  
9       311 of The Administrative Code of 1929 shall continue and remain  
10      in full force and effect and may be completed under section  
11      302(a)(7) or (8) of the act. Orders, regulations, rules and  
12      decisions which were made under section 311 of The  
13      Administrative Code of 1929 and in effect on the effective date  
14      of section 2(2) of this act shall remain in full force and  
15      effect until revoked, vacated or modified under section 302(a)  
16      (7) or (8) of the act. Contracts, obligations and collective  
17      bargaining agreements entered into under section 311 of The  
18      Administrative Code of 1929 are not affected nor impaired by the  
19      repeal of section 311 of The Administrative Code of 1929.

20      Section 4. This act shall take effect ~~immediately~~. AS           <--  
21      FOLLOWS:

22           (1) THE ADDITION OF CHAPTER 4 OF THE ACT SHALL TAKE  
23      EFFECT IN 180 DAYS.

24           (2) THE REMAINDER OF THIS ACT SHALL TAKE EFFECT  
25      IMMEDIATELY.