

Senate Bill 235

By: Senators Halpern of the 39th, Anavitarte of the 31st, Seay of the 34th, Orrock of the 36th, Beach of the 21st and others

AS PASSED SENATE

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Article 2 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to the board of regents and university system, so as to create the HBCU Innovation
3 and Economic Prosperity Planning Districts Commission; to provide for membership and
4 operation; to provide for an executive director; to provide for advisory committees; to
5 provide for powers and duties; to authorize the commission to accept funding from public
6 or private grants, devises, and bequests; to provide for reporting; to provide for related
7 matters; to provide for a short title; to provide for legislative findings; to repeal conflicting
8 laws; and for 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;

S. B. 235

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- 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; and
- 31 (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.

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SECTION 3.

34 Article 2 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the
35 Board of Regents and University System, is amended by adding a new part to read as
36 follows:

"Part 4

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20-3-100.

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

(1) The Governor shall appoint three members, one of whom shall be a current historically black college and university (HBCU) president;

(2) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint two members, one of whom shall be a member of a community that houses an HBCU;

(3) The President of the Senate shall appoint two members, one of whom shall be a current HBCU president;

(4) The minority leader of the House of Representatives shall appoint two members; and

(5) The minority leader of the Senate shall appoint two members.

(b) The members of the commission shall be individuals of recognized ability and achievement with knowledge and experience in matters pertaining to HBCUs and economic and community development.

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

63 (d) The commission shall be assigned to the university system for administrative purposes
64 only, as prescribed in Code Section 50-4-3. Reserved.

65 20-3-101.

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

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

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

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

78 (e) The commission shall provide oversight, guidance, and leadership for the planning
79 district advisory committees established pursuant to Code Section 20-3-102.

80 20-3-102.

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

83 (A) The Albany State University planning district;

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

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

86 (D) The Paine College planning district; and

87 (E) The Savannah State University planning district.

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

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

117 20-3-103.

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

124 20-3-104.

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

130 **SECTION 4.**

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