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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 2225 Session of  
2024

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INTRODUCED BY PASHINSKI, MOUL, HILL-EVANS, STAMBAUGH,  
SCHLOSSBERG, CAUSER, HOWARD, SHUSTERMAN, ROZZI, SANCHEZ,  
KINSEY, CEPEDA-FREYTIZ, KENYATTA, ZIMMERMAN, CONKLIN, BURGOS,  
KINKEAD, PROBST AND KHAN, APRIL 17, 2024

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS,  
APRIL 17, 2024

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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," establishing the Rural  
9 Population Revitalization Commission and providing for duties  
10 of the commission; and establishing the Rural Population  
11 Revitalization Fund.

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

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

17 CHAPTER 4

18 RURAL POPULATION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

19 Section 401. Scope of chapter.

20 This chapter relates to the Rural Population Revitalization  
21 Commission.

1 Section 402. Definitions.

2 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
3 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
4 context clearly indicates otherwise:

5 "Commission." The Rural Population Revitalization Commission  
6 established in section 403.

7 "Rural county." A county located in this Commonwealth with a  
8 population density less than 291 people per square mile, or as  
9 otherwise defined by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

10 "Rural school district." A public school district located in  
11 this Commonwealth with a population density less than 291 people  
12 per square mile, or as otherwise defined by the Center for Rural  
13 Pennsylvania.

14 Section 403. Establishment.

15 The Rural Population Revitalization Commission is  
16 established.

17 Section 404. Duties.

18 (a) Reviews and recommendations.--After issuing an initial  
19 report under subsection(b)(12), the commission shall issue a  
20 biennial report on population change in rural areas of this  
21 Commonwealth which shall include reviews and recommendations  
22 aimed at attracting and retaining residents in rural  
23 Pennsylvania while addressing challenges facing rural  
24 communities due to population shifts and changing demographics.  
25 Reviews and recommendations shall include, but not be limited  
26 to, the following areas:

27 (1) Increasing participation in the Federal decennial  
28 census.

29 (2) Attracting and retaining residents in rural  
30 Pennsylvania.

- 1           (3) Education and career opportunities.
- 2           (4) Access to health care.
- 3           (5) Affordable housing.
- 4           (6) Access to social services.
- 5           (7) Current issues facing rural Pennsylvania.
- 6           (8) Grant awards and tax credit opportunities for rural  
7 Pennsylvania residents and businesses.
- 8           (9) Statutory and regulatory costs and impacts on rural  
9 municipal governments, businesses and communities.
- 10           (10) Other issues facing rural Pennsylvania as  
11 identified by the commission.

12   (b) Additional powers and duties.--The commission shall have  
13 the following additional powers and duties:

14           (1) Review, make findings and offer recommendations  
15 related to addressing and mitigating rural population shifts  
16 in this Commonwealth.

17           (2) Consult with and utilize experts to assist the  
18 commission in carrying out the duties under this subsection.

19           (3) Receive input from interested parties.

20           (4) Hold public hearings in different regions of this  
21 Commonwealth. Virtual public hearings may be utilized by the  
22 commission.

23           (5) Review and consider rural development strategies  
24 utilized throughout the United States.

25           (6) Review the administration and operation of State and  
26 regional programs and services and make recommendations to  
27 implement new policies, statutes and regulations on improving  
28 quality of life and attracting residents to rural  
29 communities.

30           (7) Recommend proposed legislation and regulatory

1 changes based on the commission's findings.

2 (8) Create and maintain a database on rural  
3 Pennsylvania's demographic conditions and trends.

4 (9) Establish subcommittees, including noncommission  
5 members subject to the approval of the chairperson, to  
6 address specific population change issues.

7 (10) Provide periodic estimates on the fiscal impact of  
8 population changes to local governments, such as projected  
9 changes in tax revenue resulting from population changes.

10 (11) Collect and distribute information about available  
11 public grants, services and resources available to rural  
12 communities.

13 (12) Not later than 90 days after the effective date of  
14 this paragraph the commission shall convene its first meeting  
15 under section 406 and no later than two years after the first  
16 meeting the commission shall transmit an initial report of  
17 the commission's findings and recommendations to the  
18 following:

19 (i) The Governor.

20 (ii) All members of the Senate and the House of  
21 Representatives.

22 (iii) The Center for Rural Pennsylvania's publicly  
23 accessible Internet website.

24 Section 405. Membership.

25 (a) Members.--The commission shall consist of the following  
26 members:

27 (1) Three individuals appointed by the Governor,  
28 including one individual representing the State System of  
29 Higher Education.

30 (2) Two members from the Senate appointed by the

1 President pro tempore of the Senate, one from the majority  
2 party and one from the minority party.

3 (3) Two members from the House of Representatives  
4 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one  
5 from the majority party and one from the minority party.

6 (4) The director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania or  
7 a designee.

8 (5) An individual selected by the chairperson from an  
9 organization representing the interests of legal immigrants  
10 in rural communities.

11 (6) A representative from the Pennsylvania Office of  
12 Rural Health.

13 (7) A young adult selected from a Statewide general farm  
14 organization selected by the chairperson.

15 (8) A representative from the County Commissioners  
16 Association of Pennsylvania who holds office in a rural  
17 county.

18 (9) A representative from the County Commissioners  
19 Association of Pennsylvania's Human Services Committee from a  
20 rural county.

21 (10) A representative from the Pennsylvania School  
22 Boards Association from a rural school district.

23 (11) A representative from the Pennsylvania Chamber of  
24 Business and Industry who resides in or operates a business  
25 in a rural county.

26 (12) The executive director of the Rural Development  
27 Council or a designee.

28 (13) A certified community health worker from a rural  
29 county selected by the Pennsylvania Community Health Worker  
30 Collaborative.

1 (b) Chairperson.--The executive director of the Center for  
2 Rural Pennsylvania shall serve as chairperson of the commission  
3 until the commission elects a chairperson from the membership.  
4 The members of the commission shall elect a vice chairperson  
5 from among the members of the commission. The member elected  
6 vice chairperson shall serve in that capacity for the ensuing  
7 term.

8 (c) Considerations.--Members appointed under subsection (a)  
9 shall:

10 (1) have knowledge of problems facing rural communities  
11 in this Commonwealth;

12 (2) have experience in advocacy relating to rural  
13 issues; or

14 (3) provide leadership in programs or activities that  
15 improve the quality of life for rural communities or attract  
16 and retain residents in rural Pennsylvania.

17 (d) Terms.--The term of office of all members of the  
18 commission shall be two years. Each member shall be eligible to  
19 be reappointed to the commission.

20 Section 406. Meetings.

21 The commission shall hold its first meeting within 90 days of  
22 the effective date of this section, with quorum based upon the  
23 majority of the members who have been appointed. The commission  
24 shall hold meetings at the call of the chairperson on no less  
25 than four different dates annually.

26 Section 407. Expenses.

27 The members of the commission shall serve without salary or  
28 compensation, but shall be entitled to expenses that are  
29 reasonable and necessary to perform their duties.

30 Section 408. Administrative support.

1 The Center for Rural Pennsylvania staff shall provide  
2 administrative support, meeting space and any other assistance  
3 required by the commission to carry out the commission's duties  
4 under this chapter.

5 Section 409. Establishment of Rural Population Revitalization  
6 Fund.

7 (a) Fund established.--There is established the Rural  
8 Population Revitalization Fund, which shall be an interest  
9 bearing restricted revenue account, in which shall be deposited  
10 as money is appropriated, given, granted or donated to the  
11 commission, or to the programs provided for in Chapter 5, by the  
12 Federal Government, the Commonwealth or any other governmental  
13 or private agency or person.

14 (b) Use of fund.--Money deposited into the fund and interest  
15 earned on money deposited into the fund shall be used solely for  
16 the purpose of carrying out the provisions of Chapters 4 and 5.  
17 Section 410. Grants.

18 (a) Purpose.--In exercising its powers and duties under the  
19 provisions of this act and in order to improve planning  
20 capabilities for rural communities impacted by population  
21 shifts, the commission may make grants available in order to  
22 fulfill the commission's duties under section 404.

23 (b) Grant guidelines.--Any grant program proposed by the  
24 commission shall not be established until rules and guidelines  
25 are promulgated and approved by two-thirds of the members.

26 (c) Reporting.--The commission shall publish an annual  
27 report that includes the recipient, purpose and value of each  
28 grant awarded.

29 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 180 days.