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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 700 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY BARTOLOTTA, ARGALL, LAUGHLIN, PHILLIPS-HILL AND  
MARTIN, MAY 28, 2021

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REFERRED TO INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, MAY 28, 2021

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AN ACT

1 Establishing the Pennsylvania Commission on African American  
2 Affairs, the Pennsylvania Commission on Asian Pacific  
3 American Affairs, the Pennsylvania Commission on Latino  
4 Affairs, the Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs and the  
5 Pennsylvania Commission on Women; establishing the  
6 Commonwealth Commissions Fund; and providing for powers and  
7 duties.

8 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
9 hereby enacts as follows:

10 Section 1. Short title.

11 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Commonwealth  
12 Commissions Act.

13 Section 2. Definitions.

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

17 "Commission." A commission established under section 3(a).

18 "Fund." The Commonwealth Commissions Fund established under  
19 section 3.

20 Section 3. Establishment of independent commissions.

1 (a) Establishment.--The following independent commissions  
2 are established:

3 (1) The Pennsylvania Commission on African American  
4 Affairs.

5 (2) The Pennsylvania Commission on Asian Pacific  
6 American Affairs.

7 (3) The Pennsylvania Commission on Latino Affairs.

8 (4) The Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs.

9 (5) The Pennsylvania Commission on Women.

10 (b) Membership.--Subject to subsection (f), each commission  
11 shall consist of 40 individuals who must reside in this  
12 Commonwealth appointed as follows:

13 (1) Eight individuals by the Governor.

14 (2) Eight individuals by the Majority Leader of the  
15 Senate.

16 (3) Eight individuals by the Minority Leader of the  
17 Senate.

18 (4) Eight individuals by the Majority Leader of the  
19 House of Representatives.

20 (5) Eight individuals by the Minority Leader of the  
21 House of Representatives.

22 (c) Specific membership requirements.--Each appointing  
23 authority under subsection (b) shall appoint to each commission,  
24 subject to subsection (f), at least one individual under 29  
25 years of age, one individual 65 years of age or older, one  
26 individual who is an educational professional and one individual  
27 who is a health care professional. No active member of the  
28 Senate or House of Representatives may serve on any commission  
29 established under subsection (a).

30 (d) Diversity.--All members of each commission shall be

1 drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual  
2 orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic backgrounds in  
3 this Commonwealth.

4 (e) Term and vacancy.--Each member of each commission under  
5 subsection (a) shall serve a term of two years, beginning on  
6 the first legislative day of each new regular session of the  
7 General Assembly. A member may serve for a period longer than  
8 two years until their successor is appointed. An appointment to  
9 the commissions may be selected beginning December 1 of each  
10 year prior to the start of a new regular legislative session. A  
11 member of each commission may be removed from the commission  
12 with a two-thirds vote of all then-currently serving  
13 commissioners. A vacancy in the membership of a commission shall  
14 be filled by the original appointing authority for the balance  
15 of the unexpired term.

16 (f) Civic organization.--An appointment to a commission  
17 under subsection (a) shall be made in consultation with civic  
18 organizations incorporated in this Commonwealth that are  
19 stakeholders related to the mission of each commission. A  
20 nomination to each commission shall be solicited between  
21 September 1 and November 1 of each year preceding the start of a  
22 new session of the General Assembly through an open application  
23 process using a uniform application that is widely distributed  
24 throughout this Commonwealth by the Office of Administration.  
25 Each appointing authority shall select among the eligible  
26 candidates who have completed the application.

27 (g) Chairperson.--Each commission shall elect a chairperson  
28 at the start of each regular term from among its members. The  
29 chairperson of each commission may designate one or more  
30 commission members as vice chairs of the commission. The

1 chairperson, or a majority of members of each commission, may  
2 create advisory committees on important sectors of policy such  
3 as education, health care, human services, workforce  
4 development, rural concerns, older adults or youths and appoint  
5 members of the commission as chairs of the advisory committees  
6 and members for the advisory committees. In the event of a  
7 vacancy of a chair, the executive director of each commission or  
8 a representative from the Office of Administration shall serve  
9 as an interim chairperson.

10 (h) Meetings.--Each commission shall meet quarterly in  
11 person. If an in-person meeting is not practical as designated  
12 by either an order of the Governor, an equivalent individual or  
13 the commission chair, a virtual meeting shall be acceptable.

14 (i) Compensation.--The members of each commission may  
15 receive no compensation for services, but shall be reimbursed  
16 for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance  
17 of commission duties through the Office of Administration.

18 (j) Mission.--Each commission's mission shall be to issue  
19 recommendations on policies, procedures, legislation and  
20 regulations that affect the communities each commission  
21 represents on an ongoing basis to the Governor, the General  
22 Assembly, various State agencies and departments. The following  
23 shall apply:

24 (1) Each commission's mission shall include  
25 investigation of the use of resources from both the public  
26 and private sectors to enhance and improve the ability of  
27 State agencies to provide services to the communities in this  
28 Commonwealth.

29 (2) Each commission shall:

30 (i) Serve as a resource for community organizations

1 and provide forums for developing strategies and programs  
2 that will expand and enhance the civic, social,  
3 educational, cultural and economic status of the  
4 communities in this Commonwealth.

5 (ii) Work in partnership with various Federal, State  
6 and local agencies and departments to promote community-  
7 based programs focusing on urgent issues impacting this  
8 Commonwealth.

9 (iii) Annually, on or before June 1 of each year,  
10 report the results of its findings and activities of the  
11 preceding year and make recommendations relating to the  
12 concerns of residents of this Commonwealth to the  
13 Governor, the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk  
14 of the House of Representatives for distribution to  
15 members of the General Assembly.

16 (3) Each commission may identify programs, scholarships,  
17 mentoring programs, sources of funding or other resources for  
18 the benefit and advancement of the communities in this  
19 Commonwealth.

20 (k) Powers and duties.--Each commission shall be able to:

21 (1) Use voluntary and uncompensated services of private  
22 individuals, agencies and organizations that may from time to  
23 time be offered or required.

24 (2) Recommend policies and make recommendations to  
25 agencies and officers of the Commonwealth and local  
26 subdivisions of government to effectuate the purposes of  
27 this act.

28 (3) Subject to appropriation:

29 (i) select an executive director and acquire  
30 adequate staff to perform the duties of each commission;

1           and

2                   (ii) establish and maintain offices that the  
3           commission considers necessary.

4           (4) Enact bylaws for governance of each commission.

5           (5) Hold regular public meetings and fact-finding  
6           hearings or other public forums as each commission considers  
7           necessary.

8           (1) Administrative support.--The executive director of each  
9           commission shall be based in the Office of Administration and  
10          shall receive administrative supplies and support through the  
11          Office of Administration.

12          (m) Assistance and appropriation.--The Commonwealth  
13          Commissions Fund is established in the State Treasury. The  
14          General Assembly may appropriate money to the fund for the  
15          purpose of this act. Each commission may request information and  
16          assistance as needed from any State agency as the commission may  
17          require. Each commission may accept and solicit funds, including  
18          any gifts, donations, grants or bequests or any Federal funds  
19          for deposit in the fund.

20          Section 4. Effective date.

21          This act shall take effect in 60 days.