

House Bill 1334

By: Representatives Okoye of the 102nd, Adeyina of the 110th, Holly of the 116th, Schofield of the 63rd, Scott of the 76th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 12 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 commissions and other agencies, so as to create the Georgia-Africa and Caribbean Trade
3 Commission; to provide for members and purpose of the commission; to provide for annual
4 reporting; to create a fund for commission expenses; to provide for legislative findings and
5 intent; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 The General Assembly finds and declares that:

- 9 (1) International trade and foreign direct investment are essential drivers of Georgia's
10 economic growth, job creation, and long-term competitiveness;
- 11 (2) The nations of the African continent and Caribbean region represent some of the fastest
12 growing economies in the world, with expanding demand for agricultural products,
13 logistics services, advanced manufacturing, infrastructure, education, and technology;
- 14 (3) Georgia is uniquely positioned to expand trade and investment relationships with
15 Africa and the Caribbean due to its world-class ports, global air connectivity, logistics
16 infrastructure, research universities, and diverse workforce;

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- 17 (4) Georgia is home to growing African and Caribbean diaspora communities whose
18 business, cultural, and professional ties provide a strategic bridge for international
19 commerce and collaboration;
- 20 (5) Existing engagement between Georgia and African and Caribbean markets lacks a
21 coordinated, formal structure within state government; and
- 22 (6) The creation of a dedicated trade commission will provide strategic coordination,
23 accountability, and policy guidance to enhance economic opportunity for businesses and
24 communities throughout the state.

25 SECTION 2.

26 Chapter 12 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to commissions
27 and other agencies, is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:

28 "ARTICLE 9

29 50-12-140.

30 (a) There is established the Georgia-Africa and Caribbean Trade Commission which is
31 created to advance trade, investment, economic development, educational exchange, and
32 workforce collaboration between the State of Georgia and nations of the African continent
33 and Caribbean region. The commission shall serve in an advisory and coordinating
34 capacity to support Georgia businesses, institutions of higher education, and state agencies
35 in expanding international economic relationships. The commission shall be composed
36 of 19 members as follows:

- 37 (1) The commissioner of economic development, or his or her designee;
38 (2) The Commissioner of Agriculture, or his or her designee;
39 (3) The commissioner of community affairs, or his or her designee;
40 (4) Two members of the General Assembly to be appointed by the Governor;

- 41 (5) Four members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the
42 House of Representatives;
- 43 (6) Four members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate;
- 44 (7) One representative of the University System of Georgia to be appointed by the
45 chancellor, or his or her designee; and
- 46 (8) Five members who represent Georgia businesses, trade organizations, or
47 communities with experience in African or Caribbean markets, appointed jointly by the
48 Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate.
- 49 (b) Legislative members of the commission shall be appointed for terms of two years each
50 and until their successors are appointed and qualified.
- 51 (c) All appointments shall be made no later than 90 days following the effective date of
52 this article. A vacancy in the membership of the commission shall be filled in the same
53 manner as the original appointment was made.
- 54 (d) Members of the commission shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed
55 for expenses actually incurred in the performance of their duties, within the limit of funds
56 appropriated to the commission or otherwise made available to such commission for its
57 purposes.
- 58 (e) The commission shall meet and hold at least two annual hearings at the places and
59 times it designates throughout the state.
- 60 (f) The Governor shall designate a chairperson or cochairpersons from among the
61 members of the commission, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The
62 chairperson or cochairpersons, as appropriate, may appoint from among the commission
63 subcommittees or subcommittee chairpersons at their discretion. A majority of the
64 members of the commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business
65 of the commission.
- 66 (g)(1) The purpose of the Georgia-Africa and Caribbean Trade Commission is to:

67 (A) Identify and promote trade and investment opportunities between Georgia and
68 African and Caribbean nations;

69 (B) Support the expansion of Georgia exports and the attraction of foreign direct
70 investment into the state;

71 (C) Encourage participation by small businesses, minority owned businesses, and rural
72 enterprises in international trade;

73 (D) Promote partnerships involving education, research, innovation, and workforce
74 development;

75 (E) Coordinate, as appropriate, with the Department of Economic Development and
76 other state agencies; and

77 (F) Identify policy, regulatory, and logistical barriers affecting international commerce
78 and recommend strategies to address such barriers.

79 (2) The commission shall report its findings, results, and recommendations to the
80 Governor and the General Assembly pursuant to this article within one year of its initial
81 meeting and by February 1 of each succeeding year for the activities of the preceding
82 calendar year. The report shall be in writing and include recommendations as are
83 considered appropriate by the commission to effectuate its purpose as provided by this
84 article.

85 (h)(1) The state treasurer shall establish a separate trust fund in the state treasury that
86 shall be known as the Georgia-Africa and Caribbean Trade Commission Fund, consisting
87 of annual appropriations by the General Assembly; public or private grants, gifts,
88 donations, or contributions; and moneys from any other source, including local, state, or
89 federal program funds dedicated to the fund.

90 (2) The state treasurer shall invest the moneys held in the fund in the same manner in
91 which state funds are invested as authorized by the State Depository Board pursuant to
92 Article 3 of Chapter 17 of this title. Interest earned by the moneys held in the fund shall

93 be accounted for separately and shall be credited to the fund to be disbursed as other
94 moneys in the fund.

95 (3) Moneys held in the fund shall be expended solely as provided in this article."

96 **SECTION 3.**

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