

House Bill 1425

By: Representatives Gilliard of the 162nd, Stephens of the 164th, Westbrook of the 163rd, and
Petrea of the 166th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To create the Weeping Time Cultural Heritage Corridor Authority; to provide for definitions;
2 to provide for the purpose and powers of the authority; to provide for appointment,
3 eligibility, and terms of members of the authority; to provide for organization, quorum,
4 meetings, and expenses of the authority; to provide for rules and regulations; to provide for
5 agents and employees; to provide for accountability and for financial and other records; to
6 provide for audits; to limit the powers of the authority; to provide for open meetings and
7 public records; to provide for judicial jurisdiction; to provide that the powers of the authority
8 are supplemental; to provide for liberal construction; to provide for related matters; to repeal
9 conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

11 **SECTION 1.**

12 As used in this Act, the term:

13 (1) "Project" means land, buildings, furnishings, equipment, and facilities located or to be
14 located in Chatham County, Georgia, in the Weeping Time Cultural Heritage Corridor
15 comprising the area along Augusta Avenue in West Savannah along with the Woodville
16 and Hudson Hill neighborhoods of Savannah, Georgia;

(2) "Weeping Time" means the largest sale of enslaved Africans in American history which occurred on March 2 and 3, 1859, on the western side of Savannah, Georgia, when 429 enslaved Africans from the Butler Island Plantation were torn apart from their families and scattered across this country to pay off a gambling debt and maintain the wealth of the Butler Island Plantation owners.

SECTION 2.

There is created a body corporate and politic to be known as the Weeping Time Cultural Heritage Corridor Authority which shall be deemed to be an instrumentality of the State of Georgia and a public corporation, and by that name, style, and title such body shall contract and be contracted with, sue and be sued, implead and be impleaded, and complain and defend in all courts of law and equity. The purpose of the authority shall be for the promotion and provision of community and educational resources related to the Weeping Time, Gullah Geechee culture and history, and the journey of African Americans from slavery to freedom on the coast of Georgia. In carrying out that purpose, the authority shall solicit assistance from persons and organizations interested in supporting, financially and in other ways, the projects of the authority.

SECTION 3.

(a) The authority shall consist of five members who shall be appointed by the members of the Senate and House of Representatives whose districts include all or part of Chatham County. Each member of the authority shall be appointed for a term of two years and until such person's successor is appointed and qualified.

(b) The members of the authority shall organize and enter upon the performance of their duties immediately after the effective date of this Act. The authority shall elect from among its members a chairperson and a vice chairperson. The officers shall serve for such terms as

shall be prescribed by the rules of the authority or until their successors are appointed and qualified.

(c) Three members of the authority shall constitute a quorum, and no vacancy on the authority shall impair the right of the quorum to exercise all of the rights and perform all of the duties of the authority at every meeting, but in every instance, the affirmative vote of at least three members of the authority shall be required to authorize any legal act of the authority.

(d) The members of the authority shall not be entitled to compensation for their services, but in the event that the authority has funds dedicated for such expenditures, the members shall be reimbursed by the authority for their actual expenses in attending any meetings of the authority. The authority shall make rules and regulations for its own governance, but the authority may not employ professional staff or technical supervisors, assistants, experts, or any other agents and employees, temporary or permanent. The authority shall also establish the policies, rules, and regulations for the operation of its projects as it may require. The members of the authority shall be accountable in all respects as trustees, and the authority shall keep suitable books and records of all its obligations, contracts, transactions, undertakings, income, receipts of every kind and nature, and expenditures of every kind. The financial books and records of the authority shall be audited annually by the same auditor employed to audit the books and records of the Chatham County government. The audit shall be paid for by the authority. The audit shall be a public record.

SECTION 4.

The authority shall have the power to:

- (1) Adopt and alter a corporate seal;
- (2) Construct, reconstruct, acquire, equip, own, alter, repair, maintain, add to, extend, improve, operate, upgrade, and manage projects;

(3) Acquire in its own name by purchase or lease, on such terms and conditions and in such manner as it may deem proper, real property or rights or easements therein, any personal property necessary or convenient for its corporate purposes and use;

(4) Contract with the State of Georgia and the agencies, instrumentalities, departments, and political subdivisions thereof and with private persons or corporations in such manner as may be necessary or convenient to accomplish the purposes of this Act, including but not limited to contracts for constructing, reconstructing, leasing, acquiring, equipping, altering, repairing, maintaining, adding to, extending, improving, operating, upgrading, and managing projects;

(5) Exercise the powers provided by Code Section 45-9-1 of the O.C.G.A. to procure policies of liability insurance and contracts of indemnity to insure or indemnify members of the authority and its officers and employees against personal liability for damages arising out of the performance of their duties or in any way connected therewith to the extent that such members, officers, or employees are not immune from such liability;

(6) Make contracts and execute all instruments necessary or convenient in connection therewith; and

(7) Adopt, alter, or repeal its own bylaws, rules, and regulations governing the manner in which its business may be transacted.

SECTION 5.

The authority shall not have the power of eminent domain. The authority shall not have the power to issue revenue bonds or certificates of participation. The authority shall not have the power to incur any indebtedness in or for the purpose of the acquisition of real or personal property.

SECTION 6.

All meetings of the authority shall be conducted in accordance with Chapter 14 of Title 50 of the O.C.G.A., relating to open and public meetings. Records of the authority shall constitute public records in accordance with Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50 of the O.C.G.A., relating to inspection of public records.

SECTION 7.

Any action brought against the authority shall be brought in the Superior Court of Chatham County and such court shall have exclusive jurisdiction of such action.

SECTION 8.

The provisions of this Act shall be deemed to provide an additional and alternative method for the doing of things authorized by this Act and shall be regarded as supplemental and additional to powers conferred by other laws and shall not be regarded as in derogation of any powers now existing.

SECTION 9.

This Act, being for the welfare of Chatham County and its citizens, shall be liberally construed to effect the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 10.

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