**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING ARTICLE 10 TO CHAPTER 1, TITLE 13 SO AS TO CREATE THE DIVISION OF SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, AND TO PROVIDE RELATED DEFINITIONS, OBJECTIVES, DUTIES, AND POWERS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 1, Title 13 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 10

Division of Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development

Section 13‑1‑1510. Notwithstanding another provision of law, the following terms, when used in this article, have the following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

(1) ‘Small business’ means businesses that have one hundred or fewer employees.

(2) ‘Department’ means the Department of Commerce.

(3) ‘Division’ means the Division of Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development.

Section 13‑1‑1520. The objectives of the division are to:

(1) develop and implement an economic development strategy for promoting small businesses in South Carolina, including, but not limited to, new business start‑up, entrepreneurial development, and growth strategies for currently existing small businesses; and

(2) provide community‑based economic development assistance to local economic development organizations and community leaders in small business and entrepreneurial development strategies.

Section 13‑1‑1530. The division must:

(1) partner with other resource providers of small businesses, including state and federal agencies, to increase awareness of opportunities and assistance related to economic growth that may be available to small businesses;

(2) provide electronic access through the department’s website to a database that catalogs information concerning existing South Carolina small businesses that would be of use to larger businesses or industry prospects considering locating in South Carolina or bidding on contracts with South Carolina state and local government;

(3) create a Small Business Assistance Office to serve as a liaison for small business owners as they interact with state and local government agencies and to provide guidance concerning economic development related issues;

(4) make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly concerning legislation that would aid in fostering the growth of small businesses in the State, including integrating entrepreneurial and small business needs into existing state incentive and financial assistance programs; and

(5) annually report to the Governor and General Assembly regarding activities of the division, the progress it has made toward its objectives, and the economic impact of the activities of the division.

Section 13‑1‑1540. The division must be managed by a director selected by the Secretary of Commerce. The director has all the rights and powers necessary or convenient to manage the business and affairs of the division and to take action as he considers advisable, necessary, or convenient for accomplishing the objectives of the division, including, but not limited to, the following rights and powers to:

(1) adopt and amend bylaws for regulation of the affairs of the division consistent with this article;

(2) cooperate with the operating agencies of the State in the development of plans;

(3) have access to the records and studies of each state agency pertaining to the objectives of the division;

(4) conduct studies on his own initiative pertaining to the objectives of the division and others at the request of the Governor, the General Assembly, or state or local agencies;

(5) accept gifts, grants, funds, and property to accomplish the objectives of the division; and

(6) employ those employees, consultants, and other providers of services as the director considers necessary and to fix and to pay their compensations.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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