



House of Representatives
Study Committee on Innovative Ways to Maximize
Global Talent

Final Report

Chairman Wes Cantrell
Representative, 22nd District

The Honorable Kasey Carpenter
Representative, 4th District

The Honorable Mike Cheokas
Representative, 138th District

The Honorable Spencer Frye
Representative, 118th District

The Honorable Angelika Kausche
Representative, 50th District

Ms. Sushma Barakoti
Refugee Women's Network

Mr. Rene Diaz
Díaz Foods

November 15, 2021

Prepared by the House Budget and Research Office

Introduction

The House Study Committee on Innovative Ways to Maximize Global Talent was created by House Resolution 11, which passed during the 2021 Legislative Session. The study committee was tasked with finding solutions to strengthen Georgia's economy by enabling foreign-born Georgians to contribute to the fullest extent. Committee members attended three meetings to study the educational, training, licensing, and development issues foreign-born citizens face.

The speaker of the House appointed the following members to the committee: Representative Wes Cantrell (22nd), Chair; Representative Kasey Carpenter (4th); Representative Mike Cheokas (138th); Representative Spencer Frye (118th); Representative Angelika Kausche (50th); Ms. Sushma Barakoti with Refugee Women's Network; and Mr. Rene Diaz with Diaz Foods. The House Budget and Research Office staff member assigned to facilitate the meetings was Ms. Morgan Hall. The Office of Legislative Counsel staff member assigned to the committee was Ms. Kristi Henderson.

The committee held three public meetings and heard testimony from over 40 individuals, including representatives from the Business and Immigration for Georgia Partnership, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia Forestry Association, Dalton State College, and other members of public and private organizations.

August 19, 2021 – Georgia Piedmont Technical College (Clarkston, GA)

Ms. Darlene Lynch, Business and Immigration for Georgia Partnership; Ms. Daniela Perry, Georgia Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Santiago Marquez, Latin American Association; Ms. Paedia Mixon, New American Pathways; Mr. Ayaz Ahmed, International Rescue Committee (IRC) Atlanta; Ms. Joyeuse Muhoza, Emory Hospital; Mr. Jaime Rangel, FWD.us; Dr. Riad Sayegh; Ms. Lauren Bowden, IRC Atlanta, in conversation with Lund International; Mr. Nathan Humphrey, National Federation of Independent Businesses; Sushma Barakoti, Sunavworld, LLC; Mr. Bienfait Kinumbe, BK Painting Services, LLC; Ms. Elisa Molina, Covedoza, LLC; Dr. Meghan McBride, Georgia Piedmont Technical College; and Ms. Mary Baxter, Georgia Piedmont Technical College.

September 9, 2021 – Dalton State University (Dalton, GA)

Ms. Darlene Lynch, Business and Immigration for Georgia Partnership; Ms. Daniela Perry, Georgia Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Tripp Cofield, Georgia Farm Bureau; Mr. Andres Villegas, Georgia Forestry Association; Ms. Andrea Harper, Georgia Association of Manufacturers; Mr. Rob Bradham, Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce; Ms. Veronica Raymundo, Latin American Association, Dalton; Mr. Luke Keller, Teckton Training Center;

Mr. Joe Yarborough, Dalton Carpet and Rug Institute; and Mr. Randall Griffus, Dalton State College.

October 21, 2021 – Georgia State Capitol (Atlanta, GA)

Mr. Austin Hackney, Homebuilders Association of Georgia; Mr. Rafael Villegas, Georgia Hispanic Construction Association; Ms. Melissa Ramirez, Corners Outreach, Gwinnett; Mr. Amun Khan, Roofstock, Inc; Ms. Kristin Boscan, Georgia Bio; Mr. Brenton Strine, Refcode; Ms. Sara Irvani, Okabashi Brands; Mr. Andy Miller, Georgia Health News; Dr. Gulshan Harjee, Clarkston Community Health Center; Dr. Pierluigi Mancini, Multicultural Development Institute; Mr. Jalme Rangel, FWD.us; Ms. Paedia Mixon, New American Pathways; Ms. Gigi Pedraza, Latino Community Fund; Ms. Cassie Leymarie, Global Village Project; Ms. Darlene Lynch, Business and Immigration for Georgia Partnership; and Ms. Daniela Perry, Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

Background:

“The war for talent is being felt by companies as they compete for individuals with the right expertise and skills to drive productivity and innovation.” –Daniela Perry, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, September 9, 2021

Georgia’s population is increasingly diverse, with one in 10 Georgians being foreign-born and 50 percent of whom are naturalized citizens. These individuals come to the state one of several ways, including:

- Immigration - a person who has left their country of nationality to live permanently in a new country;
- Refugee/asylee status - a class of immigrant who fled their country and cannot return due to fear of persecution;
- Special Immigrant Visa Holder (SIVH) - a person granted permanent residency in the United States due to their services to the United States’ military or Chief of Mission in Iraq or Afghanistan; or
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) - a program that protects individuals who entered the United States unlawfully as children.

Georgia has experienced approximately 89 percent growth in global talent over the past 10 years, while Georgia’s businesses face workforce shortages across all industries¹. This committee was established to maximize global talent and provide greater prosperity for all Georgians by identifying and removing barriers to full economic participation².

¹ Darlene Lynch, The BIG Partnership

² HR 11, 2021 Session

Committee Findings

Education

Georgia is home to more than 20,000 DACA recipients, who have grown up and been educated in the state³. On average, the state of Georgia spends \$121,193 on every student between the start of kindergarten and high school graduation⁴. During his presentations, Mr. Jaime Rangel of FWD.us discussed the challenges DACA recipients face as they pursue higher education, including exclusion from receiving in-state tuition and other state or federal aid programs due to their status. According to Daniella Perry with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, affordability continues to be a significant reason why students do not pursue a higher education degree, and less than 30 percent of college students who drop out due to financial reasons return to finish their degree. To address affordability, Mr. Rangel suggested providing in-state tuition for DACA recipients. He added that the state already has a financial investment in each of these students and removing financial barriers to pursuing higher education allows them to more fully participate in the economy.

The committee also heard testimony from Ms. Joyeuse Muhoza, a refugee from Uganda who was granted asylum in 2016. She finished high school before she came to the United States and expected to be able to enroll immediately into a higher education institution to pursue a nursing degree. Due to Ms. Muhoza's immigration status, she was required to maintain residency for a year before she could enroll in courses. She worked with a local organization in the Clarkston community and is currently a nursing student at Emory University.

Occupational Licensing

The committee heard a presentation by Darlene Lynch, with the BIG Partnership. In her presentation, she stated that an estimated \$960 million in earnings and \$700 million in tax revenue are foregone each year in Georgia due to approximately 18.9 percent of foreign-born Georgians being unemployed or underemployed in low wage jobs; this is in comparison to 15.4 percent of other Georgians being unemployed or underemployed. Some specific difficulties mentioned in Ms. Lynch's presentation included obtaining recognition of professional experiences and credentials earned abroad, navigating costly and time-consuming licensing processes, securing apprenticeships and building professional networks, and acquiring professional-level English skills. In 2017, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) launched a multi-year effort to reduce licensing barriers. This

³ The BIG Partnership

⁴ Daniella Perry, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, October 21, 2021

included an option for giving state licensing boards the ability to recognize foreign licenses, as well as providing foreign education and training⁵.

Dr. Riad Sayegh provided his testimony to the committee. He has a Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry and more than 25 years of experience practicing dentistry in Syria. In 2014, Dr. Sayegh fled Syria with his family and they settled in Georgia as refugees. He faced educational, language, and financial barriers to obtaining proper credentials to practice dentistry in the state. Currently, Dr. Sayegh is still not practicing.

Small Business Development

Multiple small business owners came to present to the committee. At the first meeting in Clarkston, Georgia, the committee heard from Bienfait Kinumbe. Mr. Kinumbe immigrated to the United States in 2017 from Uganda, and he owns BK Painting Services, LLC. Currently, his business consists of himself and one employee. He testified to the committee about the difficulties in obtaining the correct license and permitting documentation. Mr. Kinumbe operates his business from his apartment and having licenses delivered has been an additional barrier.

Small business resources offered to the committee during testimony included the use of the University of Georgia's Small Business Development Centers that are located statewide to develop clear business plans, utilizing relevant associations to help with connectivity, and finding mentors to help through the process. While most of these resources are offered to all business owners, immigrant-specific services are typically offered by non-profits.

⁵ Irls Hentze, States Move to Reduce Licensing Barriers for Immigrants. National Conference of State Legislatures. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/states-move-to-reduce-licensing-barriers-for-immigrants-magazine2021.aspx>

Committee Recommendations

Upon review of the information presented, the House Study Committee on Innovative Ways to Maximize Global Talent offers the following recommendations:

1. Remove Unintended Barriers to Admission at Georgia Public Colleges

This committee urges the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to recognize credentials earned abroad and to adopt alternatives to current restrictive diploma and transcript requirements, such as the necessity for an original, sealed copy of a transcript for those individuals who may face barriers or hardships based on their status as a refugee or Special Immigrant Visa Holder. Additionally, this committee recommends for further study the creation of fiscally-responsible USG/TCSG tuition support programs for individuals who meet specific requirements such as military service or refugee status. This committee will not recommend the removal of any barriers that would in any way jeopardize the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation of these organizations.

2. Invest in English Learning

This committee supports providing additional financial resources to ensure quality K-12 education for Georgia's increasingly diverse student population and to help increase parental engagement across the many cultures within Georgia. State and federal funds should be used to develop advanced and vocation-specific English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs.

3. Streamline Requirements for Experienced Professionals

This committee recommends making assistance available for individuals navigating the licensing process. This can include developing licensing guides for online access, as well as a full-time employee to assist skilled professionals arriving from other countries and to coordinate global talent development policies.

4. Support Child Care Entrepreneurs and Expand Access to Child Care

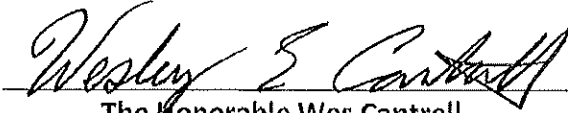
State and federal funds should be utilized to support child care micro-enterprises led by foreign-born Georgians in diverse, underserved communities. This committee urges TCSG to offer child development programs for English learners to enable more high quality child care in immigrant communities.

5. Incentivize Entrepreneurship Programs

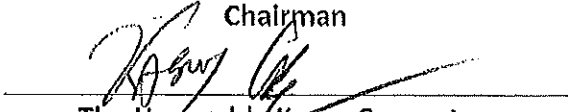
A "one-stop shop" website should be created to enable all Georgians to have access to business start-up materials. This should include incentivizing entrepreneurship programs to support business start-ups in different languages or with interpretation.

Mr. Speaker, these are the findings and recommendations of your Study Committee on Innovative Ways to Maximize Global Talent.

Respectfully Submitted,



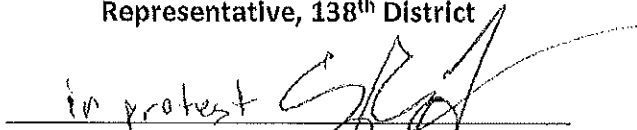
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in protest 

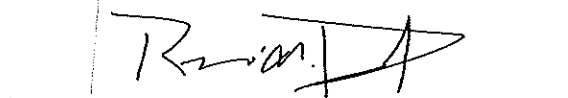
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