

House Bill 1037

By: Representatives Boddie of the 62nd, Jones of the 25th, McClain of the 100th, Hill of the 3rd, Schofield of the 60th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 3 of Chapter 8 of Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to administration of employment security, so as to provide for the development and
3 implementation of a state-wide peer workforce navigator pilot program; to provide for
4 definitions; to provide for program standards and qualifications; to provide for annual
5 reporting by the Commissioner of Labor; to provide for a short title; to provide for related
6 matters; to provide for automatic repeal; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Georgia Peer Workforce Navigator Pilot
10 Program Act."

11 **SECTION 2.**

12 Article 3 of Chapter 8 of Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
13 administration of employment security, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as
14 follows:

H. B. 1037

15 "34-8-72.1.

16 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

17 (1) 'Commissioner' means the Commissioner of Labor of the State of Georgia.

18 (2) 'Department' means the Georgia Department of Labor.

19 (3) 'Rural county' shall have the same meaning as provided in Code Section 48-7-40.17.

20 (4) 'Underserved populations' means individuals:

21 (A) With disabilities, low literacy, or limited English proficiency;

22 (B) Who are inexperienced or untrained;

23 (C) Who have experienced homelessness or may have been out of the workforce for
24 an extended period;

25 (D) Who reside in rural counties; or

26 (E) Who are naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, or are residing in this state
27 on a work-related visa.

28 (b) No later than July 1, 2023, the Commissioner shall adopt a state-wide peer workforce
29 navigator pilot program. The purpose of the pilot program shall be to:

30 (1) Target underserved populations to which to expand opportunities for employment
31 through reemployment services, education or training opportunities, apprenticeships, and
32 other models that result in skill development and family-supporting careers;

33 (2) Assist individuals with meeting basic employment needs in order to help them persist
34 in education and work;

35 (3) Connect individuals with services and job training programs provided by career
36 centers operated by the department or its workforce partners;

37 (4) Conduct outreach and provide individual assistance and education to individuals
38 applying for and making ongoing claims for unemployment compensation benefits,
39 including partial unemployment benefits and assistance for dislocated or marginalized
40 workers; and

41 (5) Identify historical issues that have created barriers to successful reemployment for
42 individuals seeking jobs, including improvements to the unemployment insurance
43 program, to reduce those barriers.

44 (c) The department shall provide for the operation of the state-wide peer workforce
45 navigator pilot program for a period of three years. The Commissioner shall, through the
46 promulgation of rules and regulations, establish the qualifications for entities applying to
47 receive procurement contracts or grants to serve as peer workforce navigators. Such
48 qualifications shall require that the entity:

49 (1) Demonstrate that it has existing peer relationships with at least 100 individuals who
50 are a part of underserved populations;

51 (2) Be a recognized advocate and source of support for underserved populations, such
52 as a labor union, worker organization, nonprofit community group, or similar entity;

53 (3) Have the capability to carry out the duties of this Code section, including knowledge
54 of eligibility requirements and application processes related to the unemployment
55 insurance program provided for in this chapter, reemployment services, education and
56 training services, and other resources necessary to help underserved populations increase
57 their economic security;

58 (4) Comply with all applicable confidentiality provisions of state and federal law to
59 ensure the privacy of the information collected from individuals receiving services of the
60 pilot program;

61 (5) Provide services pursuant to this Code section without charge to the individuals
62 receiving those services;

63 (6) Provide a performance bond or a letter of credit;

64 (7) Ensure that the services provided are linguistically appropriate to the individuals
65 being served, recognizing the varying levels of digital literacy and access to technology
66 among individuals in need of services; and

67 (8) Meet any other criteria as the Commissioner shall deem necessary to ensure that the
68 pilot program operates in accordance with the provisions of this Code section.

69 (d) The contracts or grants awarded to qualified entities pursuant to this Code section shall
70 be for the duration of the pilot program as long as the qualified entities satisfy performance
71 standards set forth in the contracts for the provided services.

72 (e) The services provided by qualified entities that receive navigator contracts or grants
73 shall be coordinated with and supplement, not supplant, other services provided by the
74 department.

75 (f) The department shall seek all available workforce development funds, including, but
76 not limited to, funding under 29 U.S.C. Section 3101, the federal Workforce Innovation
77 and Opportunity Act, that may be available for the pilot program.

78 (g) For the duration of the pilot program, the Commissioner shall submit an annual
79 detailed, written report on the implementation and effectiveness of the pilot program to the
80 Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate.
81 The final report shall also include recommendations as to expansion of the pilot program
82 state wide.

83 (h) This Code section shall be repealed in its entirety on December 31, 2026, unless
84 extended by an Act of the General Assembly."

85 **SECTION 3.**

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