

2022 -- H 7617

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE
CORPORATION -- RHODE ISLAND BLACK ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT FUND

Introduced By: Representatives Williams, Hull, Barros, Alzate, Henries, Abney, Biah,
Morales, and Cassar

Date Introduced: March 02, 2022

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 64.34

4 THE RHODE ISLAND BLACK ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND

5 **42-64.34-1. Short title.**

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Rhode Island Black Economic and
7 Community Development Fund."

8 **42-64.34-2. Legislative findings.**

9 The general assembly hereby finds and declares as follows:

10 (1) Centuries of discrimination and exploitation have left a majority of Black residents of
11 Rhode Island much poorer than their white counterparts.

12 (2) This racial wealth gap is the product of centuries of public policies and practices that
13 keep Black people from getting ahead.

14 (3) These discriminatory policies and practices created the preconditions that make Black
15 people and other historically marginalized people more vulnerable to COVID-19 inequities today.

16 (4) As reported by the United States Department of Treasury American Rescue Plan Act,
17 "too many Americans remain unemployed, out of the labor force, or unable to pay their bills, with
18 this pain particularly acute among lower-income Americans and communities of color." Taking on

1 COVID-19 inequities is key to closing the racial wealth gap by creating and capitalizing an impact
2 investment fund through state ARPA appropriations.

3 (5) Taking on COVID-19 inequities is key to closing the racial wealth gap by creating and
4 capitalizing an impact investment fund through state ARPA appropriations.

5 (6) The general assembly finds that development of a Black economic and community
6 development fund is necessary to address the issues of inequity.

7 **42-64.34-3. Rhode Island Black economic and community development fund**
8 **established.**

9 (a) The Rhode Island commerce corporation shall establish the Rhode Island Black
10 economic community development fund (RIBECDF) as an impact investment fund built
11 specifically to address economic challenges within the Black community of Rhode Island and to
12 help close the racial wealth gap.

13 (b) The fund shall target Black-owned and operated businesses, community development
14 organizations, early state entrepreneurs, and community investment projects that have a dedicated
15 socio-economic impact within qualified census tracts with substantial Black populations.

16 (c) The measure of the fund's success shall be based upon capital equity building within
17 Black residents, businesses and communities of Rhode Island that advance entrepreneurship,
18 capital access and job creation.

19 (d) RIBECDF shall be organized, located, and administered by the Rhode Island commerce
20 corporation pursuant to § 42-64-12.

21 (e) The commerce corporation shall be responsible for the establishment of the RIBECDF
22 and for the adoption of rules and standards and guidelines, eligibility qualifications, investment
23 guidelines, and performance measures for the fund.

24 (f) The commerce corporation shall establish an advisory board comprised of members
25 representing Black business and community representation to guide corporation investment
26 policies and practices.

27 (g) Investment priorities of RIBECDF shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

28 (1) Black-owned businesses;

29 (2) Entrepreneurship accelerator programs;

30 (3) Earn and learn workforce training programs;

31 (4) Real estate projects within qualified census tracts;

32 (5) Minority business development and assistance programs;

33 (6) Affordable homeownership programs;

34 (7) Micro-business grant and lending programs;

1 (8) Financial literacy and education programs;

2 (9) Renewable energy programs;

3 (10) Youth internship and career readiness programs.

4 **42-64.34-4. Reporting requirements.**

5 The commerce corporation shall annually report the status and performance of the
6 RIBECDF to the general assembly on or before the first Tuesday of November of each year.

7 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE
CORPORATION -- RHODE ISLAND BLACK ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT FUND

1 This act would establish the Rhode Island Black economic and community development
2 fund (RIBECDF) under the Rhode Island commerce corporation. RIBECDF shall be an investment
3 fund with its goals to be to address issues of discrimination and exploitation of the Black
4 community, including the impacts on that community by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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