

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1749

To authorize the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce to establish business centers at historically Black colleges and universities, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 20, 2021

Mr. WICKER (for himself, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. COONS, and Mr. TILLIS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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## A BILL

To authorize the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce to establish business centers at historically Black colleges and universities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Reaching America’s  
5 Rural Minority Businesses Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 (1) AGENCY.—The term “Agency” means the  
3 Minority Business Development Agency of the De-  
4 partment of Commerce.

5 (2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-  
6 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-  
7 mittees” means—

8 (A) the Committee on Commerce, Science,  
9 and Transportation of the Senate;

10 (B) the Committee on Small Business and  
11 Entrepreneurship of the Senate;

12 (C) the Committee on Energy and Com-  
13 merce of the House of Representatives; and

14 (D) the Committee on Small Business of  
15 the House of Representatives.

16 (3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-  
17 ty” means—

18 (A) a historically Black college or univer-  
19 sity; or

20 (B) a consortium of institutions of higher  
21 education that is led by a historically Black col-  
22 lege or university.

23 (4) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE OR UNI-  
24 VERSITY.—The term “historically Black college or  
25 university” has the meaning given the term “part B

1 institution” in section 322 of the Higher Education  
2 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061).

3 (5) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The  
4 term “institution of higher education” has the  
5 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher  
6 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

7 (6) MBDA CENTER.—The term “MBDA cen-  
8 ter” means any business center established by the  
9 Agency.

10 (7) MBDC AGREEMENT.—The term “MBDC  
11 agreement” means a collaborative agreement entered  
12 into between the Agency and an eligible entity under  
13 section 3(b)(2).

14 (8) MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.—The  
15 term “minority business enterprise” has the mean-  
16 ing given the term in section 1108(a) of the CARES  
17 Act (15 U.S.C. 9007(a)).

18 (9) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area”  
19 means an area located outside a metropolitan statis-  
20 tical area (as designated by the Office of Manage-  
21 ment and Budget).

22 (10) RURAL BUSINESS CENTER.—The term  
23 “rural business center” means an MBDA center  
24 with the functions described in section 3(c).

1           (11) RURAL MINORITY BUSINESS ENTER-  
 2           PRISE.—The term “rural minority business enter-  
 3           prise” means a minority business enterprise located  
 4           in a rural area.

5 **SEC. 3. BUSINESS CENTERS.**

6           (a) IN GENERAL.—The Agency may establish not  
 7           more than 10 rural business centers.

8           (b) PARTNERSHIP.—

9           (1) IN GENERAL.—The agency shall establish  
 10           each rural business center in partnership with an eli-  
 11           gible entity in accordance with paragraph (2).

12           (2) MBDC AGREEMENT.—

13           (A) IN GENERAL.—With respect to each  
 14           rural business center established by the Agency,  
 15           the Agency shall enter into a collaborative  
 16           agreement with an eligible entity that provides  
 17           that—

18                   (i) the eligible entity shall provide  
 19                   space, facilities, and staffing for the rural  
 20                   business center;

21                   (ii) the Agency shall provide funding  
 22                   for, and oversight with respect to, the rural  
 23                   business center; and

24                   (iii) subject to subparagraph (B), the  
 25                   eligible entity shall match 20 percent of

1           the amount of the funding provided by the  
2           Agency under clause (ii), which may be  
3           calculated to include the costs of providing  
4           the space, facilities, and staffing under  
5           clause (i).

6           (B) LOWER MATCH REQUIREMENT.—  
7           Based on the available resources of an eligible  
8           entity, the Agency may enter into a collabo-  
9           rative agreement with the eligible entity that  
10          provides that the eligible entity shall match less  
11          than 20 percent of the amount of the funding  
12          provided by the Agency under subparagraph  
13          (A)(ii).

14          (3) TERM.—The term of an MBDC agreement  
15          shall be 5 years.

16          (4) RENEWAL.—The Agency and an eligible en-  
17          tity may agree to extend the term of an MBDC  
18          agreement with respect to a rural business center for  
19          an additional 5 years.

20          (c) FUNCTIONS.—A rural business center shall—

21                  (1) primarily serve clients that are—

22                          (A) rural minority business enterprises; or

23                          (B) minority business enterprises that are  
24                  located more than 50 miles from an MBDA  
25                  center (other than that rural business center);

1 (2) focus on issues relating to—

2 (A) the adoption of broadband internet ac-  
3 cess service (as defined in section 8.1(b) of title  
4 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any suc-  
5 cessor regulation), digital literacy skills, and e-  
6 commerce by rural minority business enter-  
7 prises;

8 (B) advanced manufacturing;

9 (C) the promotion of manufacturing in the  
10 United States;

11 (D) ways in which rural minority business  
12 enterprises can meet gaps in the supply chain  
13 of critical supplies and essential goods and serv-  
14 ices for the United States;

15 (E) improving the connectivity of rural mi-  
16 nority business enterprises through transpor-  
17 tation and logistics;

18 (F) promoting trade and export opportuni-  
19 ties by rural minority business enterprises;

20 (G) securing financial capital; and

21 (H) facilitating entrepreneurship in rural  
22 areas; and

23 (3) provide education, training, and technical  
24 assistance to minority business enterprises.

25 (d) APPLICATIONS.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after  
2           the date of enactment of this Act, the Agency shall  
3           issue a request for applications from eligible entities  
4           that desire to enter into MBDC agreements with the  
5           Agency.

6           (2) CRITERIA AND PRIORITY.—In selecting an  
7           eligible entity with which to enter into an MBDC  
8           agreement, the Agency shall—

9                   (A) select an eligible entity that dem-  
10                  onstrates—

11                           (i) the ability to collaborate with gov-  
12                           ernmental and private sector entities to le-  
13                           verage capabilities of minority business en-  
14                           terprises through public-private partner-  
15                           ships;

16                           (ii) the research and extension capac-  
17                           ity to support minority business enter-  
18                           prises;

19                           (iii) knowledge of the community that  
20                           the eligible entity serves and the ability to  
21                           conduct effective outreach to that commu-  
22                           nity to advance the goals of a rural busi-  
23                           ness center;

24                           (iv) the ability to provide innovative  
25                           business solutions, including access to con-

1                   tracting opportunities, markets, and cap-  
2                   ital;

3                   (v) the ability to provide services that  
4                   advance the development of science, tech-  
5                   nology, engineering, and math jobs within  
6                   minority business enterprises;

7                   (vi) the ability to leverage resources  
8                   from within the eligible entity to advance a  
9                   rural business center;

10                  (vii) that the mission of the eligible  
11                  entity aligns with the mission of the Agen-  
12                  cy; and

13                  (viii) the ability to leverage relation-  
14                  ships with rural minority business enter-  
15                  prises; and

16                  (B) give priority to an eligible entity lo-  
17                  cated in a State or region that lacks an MBDA  
18                  center, as of the date of enactment of this Act.

19                  (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
20                  are authorized to be appropriated to the Agency to estab-  
21                  lish rural business centers under this section \$10,000,000  
22                  for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026.



1 **SEC. 4. REPORT TO CONGRESS.**

2 Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment  
3 of this Act, the Agency shall submit to the appropriate  
4 congressional committees a report that includes—

5 (1) a summary of the efforts of the Agency to  
6 provide services to minority business enterprises lo-  
7 cated in States that lack an MBDA center, as of the  
8 date of enactment of this Act, and especially in those  
9 States that have significant minority populations;  
10 and

11 (2) recommendations for extending the outreach  
12 of the Agency to underserved areas.

13 **SEC. 5. STUDY AND REPORT.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Agency, in coordination with  
15 the Administrator of the Small Business Administration,  
16 shall conduct a study on the ways in which minority busi-  
17 ness enterprises can meet gaps in the supply chain of the  
18 United States, with a particular focus on the supply chain  
19 of advanced manufacturing and essential goods and serv-  
20 ices.

21 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date  
22 of enactment of this Act, the Agency shall submit to Con-  
23 gress a report that includes—

24 (1) the results of the study conducted under  
25 subsection (a); and

1           (2) recommendations on the ways in which mi-  
2           nority business enterprises can meet gaps in the  
3           supply chain of the United States.

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