

# Reaching America's Rural Minority Businesses Act

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The Reaching America's Rural Minority Businesses Act would authorize the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) at the Department of Commerce to establish business centers at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

The MBDA's business centers are terrific assets, but the majority are located in large metropolitan areas. This bill proposes bringing the valuable resources of the MBDA to minority business enterprises in rural areas or places without easy access to an existing MBDA business center through partnerships with HBCUs. Establishing rural-focused MBDA business centers would help to leverage the expertise, innovation, and connections found throughout our nation's HBCUs for the benefit of rural minority communities.

## **Rural MBDA Business Centers**

- The Minority Business Development Agency provides assistance to local minority business enterprises through its Minority Business Centers, which are concentrated in large metropolitan areas of only 18 states.
- This inhibits the ability of rural minority business enterprises from receiving MBDA assistance.
- The Reaching America's Rural Minority Businesses Act would authorize \$10 million a year for the creation of 10 rural business centers at HBCUs. Eligible institutions would not have to be located in a rural area, but would need to demonstrate how they would serve the rural minority population.
- HBCUs would also be able to form a consortium with other institutions of higher learning, which would strengthen the capacity of an established center and broaden the outreach.
- The rural business centers would provide education, training, and technical assistance to rural minority businesses. Specifically, they would focus on issues relating to the following:
  - Adoption of broadband internet access service, digital literacy skills, and e-commerce by rural minority business enterprises;
  - The promotion of manufacturing in the United States;
  - ways in which rural minority business enterprises can meet gaps in the supply chain of critical supplies and essential goods and services for the United States;
  - Improving the connectivity of rural minority business enterprises through transportation and logistics;
  - Promoting trade and export opportunities by rural minority business enterprises;
  - Securing financial capital;
  - Facilitating entrepreneurship in rural areas.

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