**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 8‑11‑970 SO AS TO ESTABLISH A COORDINATED STATEWIDE INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE STATE WORKFORCE AND TO DEFINE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF STATE AGENCIES UNDER THIS INITIATIVE.

Whereas, South Carolina derives great strength from the diversity of its population and from its commitment to equal opportunity for all; and

Whereas, the General Assembly recognizes that we are at our best when we draw on the talents of all parts of our society and achieve greatness when diverse perspectives are brought to overcome our greatest challenges; and

Whereas, attaining a diverse, qualified workforce is one of the cornerstones of merit‑based civil service; and

Whereas, in order to fully utilize the talents of all segments of society, the State must continue to challenge itself to enhance its ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain a more diverse workforce in state employment. The State must create a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to participate to their full potential. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 11, Chapter 11, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑11‑970. (A) The board’s Division of Human Resource Management, or its successor agency, shall:

(1) establish a coordinated statewide initiative to promote diversity in the state’s workforce;

(2) within sixty days of July 1, 2017:

(a) develop and issue a statewide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, to be updated as appropriate and at a minimum of every four years, focusing on workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and agency accountability and leadership, and which must highlight comprehensive strategies for agencies to identify and remove barriers to equal employment opportunity found to exist in the state’s government recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, professional development, and training policies and practices;

(b) review applicable directives to agencies related to the development or submission of agency workforce plans and reports in connection with recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, professional development, and training policies and practices and develop a strategy for consolidating such agency plans and reports where appropriate and permitted by law; and

(c) provide guidance to agencies concerning formulation of agency‑specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plans prepared under subsection (B)(2);

(3) identify appropriate practices to improve the effectiveness of each state agency’s efforts to recruit, hire, promote, retain, develop, and train a diverse and inclusive workforce consistent with merit system principles and applicable state and federal law; and

(4) establish a system for reporting regularly on agencies’ progress in implementing their agency‑specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plans and in meeting the objectives of this section.

(B) All agencies shall implement the statewide plan developed and issued pursuant to subsection (A) and other related guidance issued by the board’s Division of Human Resource Management. The director of each agency shall:

(1) designate the agency’s chief human resource officer to be responsible for enhancing employment and promotion opportunities with the agency consistent with state and federal law and merit system principles, including development and implementation of the agency‑specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan;

(2) develop and submit for review to the board’s Division of Human Resource Management an agency‑specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for recruiting, hiring, training, developing, advancing, promoting, and retaining a diverse workforce consistent with applicable law, the statewide plan, merit system principles and other applicable workforce planning strategies and initiatives within one hundred twenty days of the issuance of the statewide plan;

(3) implement the agency‑specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan after incorporating it in the agency’s human capital plan; and

(4) provide information as specified in the reporting requirements in subsection (A)(3).”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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