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**Groundbreaking Bipartisan House Study Committee
Releases Final Report Charting a Path to a Stronger, More Inclusive Georgia Economy**

ATLANTA, GA — On December 10, 2021, the bipartisan [House Study Committee on Innovative Ways to Maximize Global Talent](#) released its [final report](#), marking a major milestone on Georgia's path toward a stronger, more dynamic and more inclusive economy. [The Business & Immigration for Georgia Partnership](#) is grateful to the Study Committee for its work and welcomes the Study Committee's final report.

Darlene Lynch, Chair of the BIG Partnership stated, "The Committee's report represents the coming together of Georgians across party lines, across the metro-rural divide, and across all sectors of the economy to recognize the contributions of foreign-born Georgians and how much more they have to give. The report is a roadmap to ensuring all Georgians have the opportunity to succeed – and to achieve the American Dream."

The Global Talent Study Committee was created when the Georgia House of Representatives passed [H.R. 11](#) unanimously earlier this year, recognizing the many skills and talents that Georgia refugees and immigrants bring to the state and acknowledging that maximizing this global talent is an opportunity to meet the state's workforce needs and help all Georgians thrive.

The Study Committee is the first-ever in Georgia dedicated to finding ways to help Georgia's foreign-born communities participate more fully in the state's economy and way of life. Chaired by Rep. Wes Cantrell (R-Woodstock), it is comprised of a bipartisan group of lawmakers from rural and metro areas of the state: Representatives Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton), Mike Cheokas (R-Americus), Spencer Frye (D-Athens) and Angelika Kausche (D-Johns Creek). It also includes community members, Sushma Barakoti, executive director of the Refugee Women's Network and Rene Diaz, president and CEO of Diaz Foods.

The Study Committee's goal was "to find out if there are things, artificial barriers, that we have created through government regulation or law that don't give a foreign-born Georgian an equal opportunity to be successful in our state," as stated by Rep. Cantrell. To do this, the Committee held a series of public meetings across the state, from Clarkston, the home of the state's refugee community, to Dalton, a North Georgia manufacturing community, to the State Capitol in the heart of the Atlanta technology industry.

The Committee heard from 18 panels and more than 40 individuals, over the course of three meetings from August through October. The panels featured Georgia industry leaders from the state's core industries – agriculture, construction, manufacturing, health care, STEM, small business – as well as doctors, dentists, business owners, tradespersons and students from the state's diverse refugee and immigrant communities.

As shown in the report, these meetings revealed a number of key insights:

- Georgia businesses are facing unprecedented workforce shortages. Daniela Perry of the [Georgia Chamber of Commerce](#) reported that more than 200,000 Georgians were on unemployment during the summer, but there were more than 400,000 job openings. In the words of Ms. Perry, "The war for talent

is being felt by companies as they compete for individuals with the right expertise and skills to drive productivity and innovation.”

- To fill in-demand jobs and adapt to evolving technologies, Georgia businesses want and need access to Georgia’s global talent. Business leaders from the Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia Forestry Association, Homebuilders Association of Georgia, Georgia Association of Manufacturers, Georgia Chapter of the National Federation of Independent Businesses and Georgia Bio all came before the Committee to urge the state to address workforce shortages by expanding access to global talent.
- Georgia voters also welcome efforts to maximize global talent. According to a poll by the [Georgia Chamber of Commerce](#) shared with the Committee, 85% of Georgia voters agree it is important for Georgia leaders to develop state specific legal immigration reform to address future workforce needs.
- Foreign-born Georgians have been a key factor in the growth and innovation of the state’s economy for decades. As shared by Darlene Lynch, Chair of the [BIG Partnership](#), 1 in 10 Georgians is foreign-born, as are approximately 1 in 7 workers, 1 in 5 doctors, 1 in 5 STEM professionals, and 1 in 3 owners of main street businesses. Nearly 50% are already U.S. citizens.
- While Georgia’s pool of global talent is deeper than most neighboring states and growing rapidly each year, [studies](#) show that 18.9 percent of foreign-born Georgians with a college degree is unemployed or employed in a low wage job, compared to 15.4 percent of other Georgians. This “brain waste” costs Georgia an estimated \$960 million in foregone earnings and \$700 million in lost tax revenue each year.
- The Committee heard many innovative proposals from Georgia business, education, health care and refugee and immigrant experts to maximize global talent and made the following recommendations:
 - **Remove Barriers to Admission at Georgia Public Colleges.** The Committee urged the Georgia universities and technical colleges to recognize credentials earned abroad and adopt more flexible documentation requirements for admissions. It recommended further study of proposals to expand in-state tuition, while highlighting data in support of proposals to offer in-state tuition benefits to DACA recipients and to classify refugees and special immigrants who aided the US military (including in Afghanistan) as in-state students.
 - **Invest in English Language Learning.** The Committee called for additional state funding to ensure quality K-12 education for Georgia’s diverse student population and increase parental engagement across cultures and to develop advanced/vocation-specific English language programs.
 - **Streamline Requirements for Experienced Professionals.** The Committee recommended facilitating the re-entry of experienced professionals into their fields in Georgia by helping them navigate the licensing system, including by developing online licensing guides and funding a full-time employee to assist incoming professionals and coordinate global talent development policies.
 - **Support Child Care Entrepreneurs and Expand Access to Child Care.** The Committee supported funding for child care micro-enterprises led by foreign-born Georgians in underserved communities and urged TCSG to offer child development programs for English learners.
 - **Incentivize Entrepreneurship Programs.** The Committee recommended creating a “one-stop shop” website to support small business owners and “incentivizing entrepreneurship programs to support business start-ups in different languages or with interpretation.”

The BIG Partnership is a statewide partnership of Georgia business and civic leaders committed to strengthening Georgia's economy by tapping the potential in the state's global communities. It is proud to support the Study Committee to ensure that all Georgians are able to achieve their full potential. [Learn more](#).

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