

May 19, 2008

**H 2239. COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE.** Filed 5/19/08. *TO ESTABLISH THE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY.*

Establishes the Community Enhancement Grant Program as a reserve fund administered by the Department of Commerce (Commerce) to be used for assistance to economically distressed counties and provide funds for sustainable community and economic development projects. Commerce will prioritize grants to municipalities and counties that have been designated Tier 1, Main Street, or 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communities. Requires recipients to report on the use of the funds to Commerce by October 1, 2009, as well as requiring Commerce to report this compiled information to the Fiscal Research Division by March 15, 2010. Allows grants to be allocated for projects that address at least one of the following: (1) economic development competitiveness or sustainability, (2) business or industry recruitment or retention, (3) improvements to infrastructure, (4) increasing local capacity to acquire economic development funding, (5) increasing local capacity to complete economic development projects, (6) rehabilitation or development of affordable housing, and (7) entrepreneurial development or seed funding. Appropriates \$12.5 million for 2008-09 for the program, with the intent that the appropriation is recurring.

Establishes the Economic Transformation Pilot Program to create collaboration between Commerce and East Carolina University (ECU) to assist in the development of communities in eastern North Carolina and serve as a model for other regions of the state. Requires Commerce to do the following in support of the program: (1) provide grants to applicants for Community Enhancement, (2) establish a pre-application process that identifies applicants that need ECU resources, (3) refer applicants to ECU for assistance, (4) review and select projects for funding that will be contingent on assistance from ECU, (5) partner with communities and ECU to implement projects, and (6) engage regional partners through long-term partnerships with the communities and ECU. Requires ECU to do the following in support of the program: (1) provide grant writing and technical assistance, (2) conduct community survey research and design, (3) provide entrepreneurial and small business technical assistance, (4) conduct feasibility study assistance, (5) analyze economic impact of projects, (6) assist with development of business plans, (7) assist in community design, (8) partner with communities and Commerce to implement projects, and (9) engage regional partners through long-term partnerships with communities and Commerce. Appropriates \$5 million for 2008-09 for the program, with the intent that the appropriation is recurring.

**Intro. by Tolson, McLawhorn, E. Warren.**

UNCODIFIED, APPROP