



University Centers for Growth, Development, and Prosperity (GDP) Act

Background:

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) created the University Center program to allow institutions of higher education and consortia to establish and maintain University Centers.

University Centers are federal partnerships that leverage the assets of higher-learning institutions to strengthen regional economic growth by promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and job creation. They encourage economic development in economically distressed regions, which helps spur job growth, high-skilled regional talent pools, and business expansion.

The current EDA program helps universities collaborate with economic development districts, trade adjustment assistance centers, and other economic development technical assistance and service providers to develop and implement comprehensive economic development strategies and other economic development planning at the local, regional, and State levels, with a focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development.

What the problem is:

Despite EDA's important work, many communities across the country have yet to benefit from the agency's programs, including smaller communities, communities of color, and rural areas experiencing higher rates of poverty.

The current University Center program is not specifically authorized by Congress and is instead part of EDA's Technical Assistance program. This bill would improve the equity of EDA programming and help increase the participation of minority-serving institutions.

What the bill would do:

The legislation would codify the EDA's University Center Economic Development Program, increase the number of University Centers, and bolster funding to between \$500,000 to \$1 million per University Center – up from roughly \$125,000 currently. It also would prioritize the participation of Minority-Serving Institutions as part of the University Center program.