

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2003

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HOUSE BILL 1443*
Committee Substitute Favorable 5/27/04
Third Edition Engrossed 6/10/04

Short Title: Commerce ServiCenter.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

May 13, 2004

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A BUSINESS SERVICE CENTER IN THE
3 DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 **SECTION 1.** Article 10 of Chapter 143B of the General Statutes is amended
6 by adding a new Part to read:

7 "Part 20. Business Service Center.

8 **"§ 143B-472.100. Business Service Center established.**

9 (a) There is established within the Department of Commerce the Business
10 Service Center. The Business Service Center shall be a clearinghouse for State business
11 information and shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- 12 (1) Provide the business community with an information resource center
13 that disseminates information on State resources available to them and
14 to respond to business inquiries about these services.
- 15 (2) Provide the public with an information resource center that
16 disseminates information regarding State statutory and regulatory
17 requirements to conduct business in the State, including authoritative
18 sources and procedures and referrals to contact persons within the
19 appropriate State agencies.
- 20 (3) Implement and administer an automated system to track the number of
21 contacts or inquiries received each year, the nature of each contact or
22 inquiry, and the final resolution offered in response to each contact or
23 inquiry for the purpose of recommending legislative and
24 administrative revisions.
- 25 (4) Work with the business license coordinator designated in each State
26 agency pursuant to G.S. 147-54.17 to determine the status of requests
27 for information or assistance and to resolve any disputes that may arise

1 between agencies and businesses regarding compliance with laws,
2 rules, or policies of the State or agency.

3 (5) Make recommendations to agencies and the General Assembly
4 regarding proposed policies, rules, or laws to improve the
5 dissemination of information to small businesses regarding statutory
6 and regulatory requirements and to improve licensing procedures
7 affecting business undertakings, including alternatives such as
8 eliminating, consolidating, simplifying, or expediting particular
9 licenses.

10 (b) The Business Service Center shall designate a Small Business Ombudsman to
11 work with small businesses to ensure they receive timely answers to questions and
12 timely resolution of issues involving State government. The Small Business
13 Ombudsman shall have the authority to make inquiry of State agencies on behalf of a
14 business to receive information concerning the status of a business' inquiry, and to
15 convene representatives of various State agencies to discuss and resolve specific issues
16 raised by a business. The Small Business Ombudsman shall also work with the small
17 business community to identify problems in State government related to unnecessary
18 delays, inconsistencies between regulatory agencies, and inefficient uses of State
19 resources.

20 (c) The Secretary shall adopt rules and forms necessary to carry out the purposes
21 of this Part.

22 **"§ 143B-472.101. Confidentiality of requests.**

23 At the request of the person or applicant, the identity of the person or other entity
24 requesting assistance or information pursuant to this Part shall remain confidential and
25 shall not be disseminated to any State agency or person outside the Business Service
26 Center. This section does not apply when the Secretary determines that the health,
27 safety, or welfare of the citizens of the State is at risk. The Secretary shall adopt rules,
28 including exceptions to the confidentiality requirement, to implement this section.

29 **"§ 143B-472.102. Reporting requirements of the Secretary of Commerce.**

30 The Secretary shall report to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental
31 Operations on recommended legislative proposals or administrative revisions to
32 improve State government communications and relations with the public and to make
33 those communications and relations more effective and efficient."

34 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.