

# Georgia Environmental Health Equity Act of 2024

## Addressing the Health Consequences of Georgia's Brownfields

### Purpose

The purpose of this legislation is to address the substantial and disproportionate health impacts of Brownfields on Black and Brown communities within Georgia. Environmental factors play a pivotal role in these communities' overall quality of life and health outcomes. From environmental racism and limited access to green spaces to the broad implications of climate change, the urgency of addressing systemic environmental disparities has never been more pronounced. This bill zeroes in on the environmental challenge posed by Brownfields, abandoned or underutilized properties replete with pollutants, hazardous substances, or contaminants. Such properties significantly endanger the health and quality of life of communities of color due to longstanding racial segregation, socio-economic disparities, and systemic environmental racism.

### Definitions

- **Brownfields:** Abandoned or underutilized properties that have the presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants.
- **Communities of color:** Refers to non-white communities, focusing on Black and Brown populations within Georgia.

### Scope

This legislation will:

1. Provide funding for comprehensive health studies in communities located near Brownfields.
2. Introduce stricter environmental regulations for Brownfields.
3. Ensure community involvement in Brownfield cleanup and redevelopment processes.
4. Offer tax incentives for businesses that engage in Brownfield remediation.
5. Establish community green spaces in areas affected by Brownfields.

### Provisions

1. **Research and Data Collection**
  - The State shall commission a comprehensive study to understand the full range of health impacts directly attributable to Brownfields.

- Such studies shall prioritize communities of color and areas with historical patterns of racial segregation.
2. **Enhanced Regulation and Oversight**
    - All Brownfield sites must undergo a thorough environmental risk assessment.
    - Mandate regular monitoring and public reporting of pollutant levels at Brownfield sites.
  3. **Community Engagement and Redevelopment**
    - Prioritize community engagement in the decision-making process for Brownfield remediation.
    - Encourage the development of affordable housing, community centers, and green spaces post-remediation.
  4. **Financial Incentives and Support**
    - Offer tax breaks for companies engaging in Brownfield cleanup.
    - Financially support community-based organizations involved in Brownfield awareness and advocacy.
  5. **Healthcare Support**
    - Fund community health centers in areas affected by Brownfields, focusing on the specific health concerns associated with pollutant exposure.

## **Enforcement**

1. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) will oversee the enforcement of regulations related to Brownfields.
2. Any violations related to pollutant emissions, non-disclosure, or mismanagement of Brownfields shall result in stringent penalties, including fines and potential incarceration for repeat offenses.

## **Amendments to Existing Laws**

This bill will require amendments to Georgia's existing environmental protection laws, ensuring that Brownfields are a top priority and that communities of color receive the necessary protection and support.

## **Justification**

The provisions above are crucial, given the extensive data highlighting the deleterious health consequences of Brownfields on Black and Brown communities in Georgia. The various studies and data cited elucidate the urgency and significance of this legislation.

## References

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