By: Miles S.B. No. 376

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the Texas Freedman's Bureau.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subtitle E, Title 4, Government Code, is amended by adding Chapter 473 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 473. TEXAS FREEDMAN'S BUREAU

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 473.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Bureau" means the Texas Freedman's Bureau established under this chapter.

(2) "Commissioner" means a commissioner of the Texas Freedman's Bureau.

(3) "Freedman" means an individual who was a freed slave, under the Freedman's Bureau Act of 1865, from the period of 1861 to 1868 as identified by Congress.

Sec. 473.002. ESTABLISHMENT OF BUREAU. The Texas Freedman's Bureau is established to assist the residents of this state in determining their ancestry and heritage, provide assistance to residents who are certified descendants of freedmen, and promote the use of the term "freedmen" in demographic data collected in this state.

Sec. 473.003. APPLICATION OF SUNSET ACT. The bureau is subject to Chapter 325 (Texas Sunset Act). Unless continued in existence as provided by that chapter, the bureau is abolished and

this chapter expires September 1, 2037.

SUBCHAPTER B. BUREAU

Sec. 473.101. COMPOSITION; TERMS; COMPENSATION. (a) The bureau is composed of five commissioners appointed by the governor. In making the appointments, the governor shall consider candidates suggested by the Texas Volunteer Council on Freedmen Affairs.

(b) The commissioners serve two-year terms.

(c) A commissioner serves without compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for travel and other expenses incurred by the commissioner while conducting the business of the bureau as provided by the General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 473.102. DIRECTOR; EMPLOYEES. The bureau shall employ a director for each bureau office and other employees necessary to administer this chapter.

Sec. 473.103. ADMINISTRATIVE ATTACHMENT. (a) The bureau is administratively attached to the Health and Human Services Commission.

(b) The Health and Human Services Commission, using existing resources, shall provide the administrative support and personnel necessary for the bureau to implement this chapter.

Sec. 473.104. OFFICES. The bureau shall maintain an office within facilities of the Health and Human Services Commission and other state agencies, as appropriate, in the following counties:

(1) Bexar County;

(2) Dallas County;

(3) Harris County; and

(4) Travis County.

SUBCHAPTER C. POWERS AND DUTIES

Sec. 473.201. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES. The bureau shall:

(1) establish and maintain a database to collect demographic data for the purpose of assisting residents of this state in establishing ancestral ties with freedmen;

(2) provide a freedmen identification card to each resident who establishes ancestral ties with a freedman;

(3) assist residents who are descendants of freedmen with obtaining reparations, including by providing legal assistance with filing claims for reparations; and

(4) promote the use of the term "freedmen" for descendants of freed slaves in all demographic data related to ethnicity, nationality, or race collected by a state agency or political subdivision.

Sec. 473.202. STRATEGIC PLAN; COLLABORATION. (a) The bureau, in collaboration with other state agencies, state officials, and nonprofit organizations, shall create a strategic plan for implementing this chapter.

(b) The strategic plan must identify:

(1) the locations for the bureau offices;

(2) the resources the bureau will operate and maintain;

(3) the bureau's plan to assist descendants of freedmen with obtaining reparations; and

(4) the assistance required from other state agencies and state officials to implement this chapter.

(c) The comptroller, attorney general, Department of Public

Safety, Parks and Wildlife Department, and other appropriate state agencies and state officials shall assist the bureau as necessary to implement this chapter and develop the strategic plan.

Sec. 473.203. RULES. The bureau and executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission may adopt the rules necessary to implement this chapter.

SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the governor shall appoint the commissioners to the Texas Freedman's Bureau as required by Chapter 473, Government Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2027.