

ASSEMBLY, No. 1108

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 218th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2018 SESSION

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SYNOPSIS

Establishes Firearm Violence Research Center at Rutgers, The State University.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/6/2018)

1 AN ACT establishing a Firearm Violence Research Center and
2 supplementing chapter 65 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

7
8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. Firearm violence is a major public health and safety problem
10 in New Jersey and throughout the United States. Both nationally
11 and in New Jersey, death rates due to firearm-related injuries have
12 remained essentially unchanged for more than a decade.

13 b. In 2014, there were 468 firearm-related deaths in New
14 Jersey. On average, 300 to 400 homicides occur per year in New
15 Jersey, and firearms are used in two-thirds of them. Suicides
16 involving a firearm also account for a significant portion of firearm-
17 related deaths in the State.

18 c. Although the rate of firearm-related deaths in New Jersey is
19 below the national average, the numbers are not low enough. In
20 local communities where firearm violence is a frequent occurrence,
21 the very structure of daily life is affected.

22 d. Too little is known about firearm violence and prevention,
23 and not enough research has been done. The crucial need for more
24 sophisticated research, and for more support for the research, is
25 readily apparent.

26 e. Federal funding for firearm violence research through the
27 federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been
28 virtually eliminated since 1996, leaving a major gap that must be
29 filled by other sources.

30
31 2. a. There is established a Firearm Violence Research Center,
32 hereinafter referred to as the center, at Rutgers, The State
33 University. The purpose of the center shall be to carry out
34 interdisciplinary research activities that address the causes,
35 prevention, and reduction of firearm-related violence.

36 b. The center shall conduct basic, translational, and
37 transformative research with a mission to provide the scientific
38 evidence on which sound firearm violence prevention policies and
39 programs may be based. The center's research shall include, but
40 need not be limited to, the following:

41 (1) the nature of firearm violence, including individual and
42 societal determinants of risk for involvement in firearm violence,
43 whether as a victim or a perpetrator;

44 (2) the individual, community, and societal consequences of
45 firearm violence;

46 (3) prevention and treatment of firearm violence at the
47 individual, community, and societal levels;

1 (4) the effectiveness of existing laws and policies intended to
2 reduce firearm violence, including the criminal misuse of firearms;
3 and

4 (5) efforts to promote the responsible ownership and use of
5 firearms.

6 c. The center shall work on a continuing basis with State
7 policymakers to identify, implement, and evaluate innovative
8 firearm violence prevention policies and programs.

9 d. To help ensure a successful, long-term effort to understand
10 and prevent firearm violence, the center shall recruit and provide
11 specialized training opportunities for new researchers, including
12 experienced investigators in related fields who are beginning work
13 on firearm violence, young investigators who have completed their
14 education, postdoctoral scholars, doctoral students, and
15 undergraduates.

16 e. As a supplement to its own research, the center may
17 administer a small grant program for research on firearm violence.
18 Research funds under the grant program shall be awarded on the
19 basis of scientific merit as determined by an open, competitive peer
20 review process that assures objectivity, consistency, and high
21 quality. The peer review process shall be modeled on the process
22 used by the National Institutes of Health in its grant-making
23 process. All qualified investigators, regardless of institutional
24 affiliation, shall have equal access and opportunity to compete for
25 research funds under the grant program.

26

27 3. State departments and agencies including, but not limited to,
28 the Department of Health, the Department of Law and Public
29 Safety, the New Jersey State Police, the Department of Human
30 Services, and the Motor Vehicle Commission, shall provide to the
31 center, upon request, the data necessary for the center to conduct its
32 research.

33

34 4. One year following the establishment of the Firearm
35 Violence Research Center, and every five years thereafter, Rutgers,
36 The State University shall submit a report to the Governor, and to
37 the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-
38 19.1), regarding the work of the center. The report shall include,
39 but not be limited to, information on the center's current research
40 projects, the amount and sources of funding utilized, and the future
41 direction of the center's research. If the center administers a grant
42 program for firearm violence research, the report also shall include
43 information on the grants made, pending grants, and
44 accomplishments of the program.

45

46 5. The center and any recipients of grants awarded by the
47 center shall provide copies of their research publications to the
48 Governor, to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991,

1 c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), and to any State departments or agencies that
2 supplied data used in connection with that research, as soon as
3 practicable following publication.

4
5 6. a. The Legislature shall annually appropriate such amounts
6 as are necessary to fund the research activities of the Firearm
7 Violence Research Center and the functioning of the center.

8 b. The center may solicit and accept any grants, gifts,
9 donations, or other additional funds from public or private sources,
10 which may be available for research related to firearm violence.

11
12 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

16

17 This bill establishes a Firearm Violence Research Center at
18 Rutgers, The State University for the purpose of carrying out
19 interdisciplinary research activities that address the causes,
20 prevention, and reduction of firearm-related violence.

21 The center will conduct basic, translational, and transformative
22 research with a mission to provide the scientific evidence on which
23 sound firearm violence prevention policies and programs may be
24 based. The center's research will include, but is not limited to, the
25 following:

26 (1) the nature of firearm violence, including individual and
27 societal determinants of risk for involvement in firearm violence,
28 whether as a victim or a perpetrator;

29 (2) the individual, community, and societal consequences of
30 firearm violence;

31 (3) prevention and treatment of firearm violence at the
32 individual, community, and societal levels;

33 (4) the effectiveness of existing laws and policies intended to
34 reduce firearm violence, including the criminal misuse of firearms;
35 and

36 (5) efforts to promote the responsible ownership and use of
37 firearms.

38 In furtherance of its goals, the center will work on a continuing
39 basis with State policymakers to identify, implement, and evaluate
40 innovative firearm violence prevention policies and programs. The
41 center will also recruit and provide specialized training
42 opportunities for new researchers.

43 The bill authorizes the center, in addition to its own research, to
44 administer a small grant program for research on firearm violence.
45 Research funds under the grant program will be awarded on the
46 basis of scientific merit under a competitive peer review process,
47 and all qualified investigators will have an equal opportunity to
48 compete for grant funds.

1 The bill requires Rutgers to submit a report on the work of the
2 center to the Governor and the Legislature one year following the
3 establishment of the center, and every five years thereafter. The
4 report must include information on the center's current research
5 projects, funding utilized, and the future direction of its research. If
6 the center administers a grant program, the report will also include
7 information on the grants awarded and the program's
8 accomplishments. In addition, the center and any recipients of
9 grants awarded by the center will provide copies of their research
10 publications to the Governor, the Legislature, and any State
11 departments or agencies that supplied data used in connection with
12 the research.

13 Under the bill, the Firearm Violence Research Center will be
14 funded through an annual appropriation by the Legislature, and by
15 any grants, gifts, donations, or other additional funds received by
16 the center from public or private sources for research related to
17 firearm violence.