ASSEMBLY, No. 972

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:
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SYNOPSIS

Establishes commission to study effects on adolescents of smart phone and social media usage in school.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

AN ACT establishing the Commission on the Effects of Smart Phone and Social Media Usage on Adolescents.

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

1. a. There is established the Commission on the Effects of Smart Phone and Social Media Usage on Adolescents. The purpose of the commission is to study the extent of smart phone and social media usage in public schools, and to determine the effects that use has on the physical and emotional health and academic performance of students.

b. The commission shall consist of 15 members as follows:

(1) the Commissioner of Education, ex officio, or a designee;

(2) one public member appointed by the President of the Senate and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, both of whom shall have demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the commission;

(3) one public member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly, both of whom shall have demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the commission; and

(4) 10 members appointed by the Governor, including one representative from each of the following organizations: the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey Parent-Teacher Association, Advocates for Children of New Jersey, the New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition, and the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists; and two parents of students enrolled in a public school.

2. Appointments to the commission shall be made within 30 days after the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members of the commission within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the commission for its purposes.

3. The commission shall organize as soon as practicable following the appointment of its members, but not later than 60 days after the effective date of this act. The commission shall choose a chairperson from among its members and shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the commission. The commission shall meet at least quarterly.

4. The Department of Education shall provide such stenographical, clerical, and other administrative assistants, and such professional staff as the commission requires to carry out its work. The commission also shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available for its purposes.

5. It shall be the duty of the commission to determine:

a. the extent of smart phone and social media usage in public schools, including the average amount of time students in various age groups spend each day in school on electronic devices;

b. the effects that use has on the emotional health of students, including incidents of harassment, intimidation or bullying, or other disruptive or violent behaviors;

c. the effects that use has on the academic performance of students;

d. the effects that use has on the physical health of students, including incidents of depression, sleep deprivation, weight loss or gain, or high blood pressure;

e. the establishment of smart phone and social media usage standards, including limiting the amount of time students spend on electronic devices during the school day; and

f. any other proposals concerning the use of smart phones and social media that the commission feels would help improve the physical and emotional health and the academic performance of students.

6. The commission shall issue a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than one year after the commission organizes.

7. This act shall take effect immediately, and the commission shall expire 30 days after the submission of its report.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the Commission on the Effects of Smart Phone and Social Media Usage on Adolescents. Under the bill, the commission will consist of 15 members including: the Commissioner of Education, or a designee; one public member appointed by the President of the Senate and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate; one public member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly; and 10 members appointed by the Governor, including

one representative from each of the following organizations: the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey Parent-Teacher Association, Advocates for Children of New Jersey, the New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition, and the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists; and two parents of students enrolled in a public school.

It will be the duty of the commission to determine:

- the extent of smart phone and social media usage in public schools, including the average amount of time students in various age groups spend each day in school on electronic devices;
- the effects that use has on the emotional health of students, including incidents of harassment, intimidation or bullying, or other disruptive or violent behaviors;
- the effects that use has on the academic performance of students; and
- the effects that use has on the physical health of students, including incidents of depression, sleep deprivation, weight loss or gain, or high blood pressure.

The bill directs the commission to issue a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature no later than one year after its organizational meeting. The commission will expire 30 days after the submission of the final report.