

ASSEMBLY, No. 1901

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman BENJIE E. WIMBERLY

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Assemblywoman SHANIQUE SPEIGHT

District 29 (Essex)

Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

**Assemblywomen McKnight, Tucker, Timberlake, Assemblyman Conaway
and Assemblywoman Jasey**

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “New Jersey Eviction Crisis Task Force.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ACT** establishing a task force to study the housing and eviction
2 crisis in this State.

3

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

6

7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. The majority of poor renting families in America spend over
9 half of their income on housing costs, and eviction is transforming
10 their lives. Yet, very little is known about the prevalence, causes,
11 and consequences of eviction specifically, and housing insecurity in
12 general.

13 b. In recent years, poor renting families have witnessed their
14 incomes flatline while their housing costs have soared. In addition,
15 only one in four families who qualifies for affordable housing
16 programs receives any assistance. As more and more low-income
17 families find it difficult to pay their housing costs, a growing
18 number are living one misstep or emergency away from eviction.

19 c. Research has shown that the most vulnerable members of
20 our communities are at the highest risk of eviction. Low-income
21 women, especially poor women of color, have a high risk of
22 eviction. Domestic violence victims and families with children are
23 also at a particularly high risk for eviction.

24 d. Eviction causes individuals and families to lose their home.
25 They often are also forced to leave their community, and their
26 children have to change schools. Families regularly lose their
27 possessions, which are piled on a sidewalk, or placed in storage to
28 be reclaimed after paying a fee. Studies show that eviction causes
29 job loss, as the stress and the lengthy process associated with being
30 forcibly expelled from a home leads people to make mistakes at
31 work and lose their job. Eviction has been shown to affect the
32 mental health of those who experience it; one study found that
33 mothers who experienced eviction reported higher rates of
34 depression two years after their move.

35 e. The lack of affordable housing presents extremely difficult
36 challenges to the most vulnerable residents of this State, and it is
37 the foundation of a host of other societal problems, including
38 homelessness, poverty, and educational disparities. This warrants a
39 thorough understanding of the eviction crisis so that communities,
40 policymakers, and researchers may adequately address these
41 problems. Therefore, it is in the public interest to establish a task
42 force to study the eviction crisis and submit recommendations for
43 legislation and strategies to address this issue.

44

45 2. There is established the “New Jersey Eviction Crisis Task
46 Force.” The purpose of the task force is to study recent trends in
47 eviction actions against residents of this State, identify the impact
48 of evictions on renters, landlords, local governments, and the State,

- 1 and make recommendations for legislation and strategies to create
- 2 more effective and efficient policies regarding housing and
- 3 evictions in the State. The task force shall consider:
- 4 a. the causes and consequences of eviction at the State and
- 5 local level;
- 6 b. the prevalence of eviction actions throughout the State;
- 7 c. the unmet legal needs of New Jersey residents facing
- 8 eviction, including the costs associated with legal assistance and
- 9 any funding mechanisms that may be utilized for the provision of
- 10 legal assistance;
- 11 d. existing laws, rules, or regulations in this State that govern
- 12 housing in general, and the eviction process in particular;
- 13 e. pending legislation in this State that addresses the eviction
- 14 process;
- 15 f. pending legislation and existing programs in other states or
- 16 jurisdictions that address the eviction crisis in the United States;
- 17 g. how affordable housing issues may exacerbate the eviction
- 18 epidemic in this State;
- 19 h. how the eviction crisis may impact rates of homelessness in
- 20 this State;
- 21 i. how the eviction process can be made more transparent, fair,
- 22 and equitable for both residents and landlords; and
- 23 j. any other considerations the task force deems appropriate
- 24 towards improving the eviction crisis in this State.
- 25
- 26 3. a. The task force shall consist of 23 members as follows:
- 27 (1) the Commissioners of Community Affairs, Human Services,
- 28 and Health, and the Attorney General, or their designees, who shall
- 29 serve ex officio;
- 30 (2) two members of the Senate, to be appointed by the President
- 31 of the Senate, who shall each be of different political parties; and
- 32 two members of the General Assembly, to be appointed by the
- 33 Speaker of the General Assembly, who shall each be of different
- 34 political parties;
- 35 (3) two members appointed by the Chief Justice of the New
- 36 Jersey Supreme Court, including one who shall be the dean of a law
- 37 school located in this State; and
- 38 (4) 13 public members, who shall be appointed by the Governor
- 39 no later than the 60th day after the effective date of this act, as
- 40 follows: one person upon the recommendation of the New Jersey
- 41 Apartment Association; one person upon the recommendation of the
- 42 Fair Share Housing Center; one person upon the recommendation of
- 43 the Legal Services of New Jersey; one person upon the
- 44 recommendation of the New Jersey Tenants Organization; one
- 45 person upon the recommendation of the Bergen County Housing,
- 46 Health, and Human Services Center; one person upon the
- 47 recommendation of the Fair Housing Council of Northern New
- 48 Jersey; one person upon the recommendation of New Jersey

1 Coalition to End Homelessness; one person upon the
2 recommendation of the Supportive Housing Association of New
3 Jersey; one person upon the recommendation of the Housing and
4 Community Development Network of New Jersey; one person upon
5 the recommendation of Family Promise of New Jersey; and three
6 members of the public who have a demonstrated expertise in issues
7 relating to the work of the task force.

8 b. The Commissioner of Community Affairs or the
9 commissioner's designee shall serve as chairperson of the task
10 force. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable
11 following the appointment of its members and shall select a vice-
12 chairperson from among the members. The chairperson shall
13 appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

14 c. The public members shall serve without compensation, but
15 shall be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the
16 performance of their duties and within the limits of funds available
17 to the task force.

18 d. The task force shall be entitled to call to its assistance and
19 avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county or
20 municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it
21 may require and as may be available to it for its purposes.

22 e. The task force may meet and hold hearings at the places it
23 designates during the sessions or recesses of the Legislature.

24 f. The Department of Community Affairs shall provide staff
25 support to the task force.

26 g. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled
27 in the same manner provided for the original appointments.

28
29 4. The task force shall report its findings and recommendations
30 to the Governor, and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of
31 P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), along with any legislation that it
32 desires to recommend for adoption by the Legislature, no later than
33 18 months after the date of organization of the task force.

34
35 5. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon
36 the issuance of the task force report.

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38

39 STATEMENT

40

41 This bill establishes the "New Jersey Eviction Crisis Task
42 Force." The purpose of the task force is to study recent trends in
43 eviction actions against residents of this State, identify the impact
44 of evictions on renters, landlords, local governments, and the State,
45 and make recommendations for legislation and strategies to create
46 more effective and efficient policies regarding housing and
47 evictions in the State. The task force will consider:

- 1 (1) the causes and consequences of eviction at the State and
2 local level;
 - 3 (2) the prevalence of eviction actions throughout the State;
 - 4 (3) the unmet legal needs of New Jersey residents facing
5 eviction, including the costs associated with legal assistance and
6 any funding mechanisms that may be utilized for the provision of
7 legal assistance;
 - 8 (4) existing laws, rules, or regulations in this State that govern
9 housing in general, and the eviction process in particular;
 - 10 (5) pending legislation in this State that addresses the eviction
11 process;
 - 12 (6) pending legislation and existing programs in other states or
13 jurisdictions that address the eviction crisis in the United States;
 - 14 (7) how affordable housing issues may exacerbate the eviction
15 epidemic in this State;
 - 16 (8) how the eviction crisis may impact rates of homelessness in
17 this State;
 - 18 (9) how the eviction process can be made more transparent, fair,
19 and equitable for both residents and landlords; and
 - 20 (10) any other considerations the task force deems appropriate
21 towards improving the eviction crisis in this State.
- 22 The task force will be comprised of 23 members as follows:
- 23 (1) the Commissioners of Community Affairs, Human Services,
24 and Health, and the Attorney General, or their designees, who will
25 serve ex officio;
 - 26 (2) two members of the Senate, to be appointed by the President
27 of the Senate, who will each be of different political parties; and
28 two members of the General Assembly, to be appointed by the
29 Speaker of the General Assembly, who will each be of different
30 political parties;
 - 31 (3) two members appointed by the Chief Justice of the New
32 Jersey Supreme Court, including one who is the dean of a law
33 school located in this State; and
 - 34 (4) 13 public members, to be appointed by the Governor no later
35 than the 60th day after the effective date of this bill, as follows: one
36 person upon the recommendation of the New Jersey Apartment
37 Association; one person upon the recommendation of the Fair Share
38 Housing Center; one person upon the recommendation of the Legal
39 Services of New Jersey; one person upon the recommendation of
40 the New Jersey Tenants Organization; one person upon the
41 recommendation of the Bergen County Housing, Health, and
42 Human Services Center; one person upon the recommendation of
43 the Fair Housing Council of Northern New Jersey; one person upon
44 the recommendation of the New Jersey Coalition to End
45 Homelessness; one person upon the recommendation of the
46 Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey; one person upon
47 the recommendation of the Housing and Community Development
48 Network of New Jersey; one person upon the recommendation of

1 Family Promise of New Jersey; and three members of the public
2 who have a demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of
3 the task force.

4 The bill provides that the Commissioner of Community Affairs
5 or the commissioner's designee will serve as chairperson of the task
6 force. The members will service without compensation, but will be
7 reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of
8 their duties and within the limits of funds available to the task force.

9 The task force may call to its assistance and avail itself of the
10 services of the employees of any State, county or municipal
11 department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require
12 and as may be available to it for its purposes. The task force may
13 meet and hold hearings at the places it designates during the
14 sessions or recesses of the Legislature. The bill directs the
15 Department of Community Affairs to provide staff support to the
16 task force.

17 Finally, the task force is to report its findings and
18 recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature, along with
19 any legislation that it desires to recommend for adoption by the
20 Legislature, no later than 18 months after the date of organization of
21 the task force, at which point the task force will expire.