

# ASSEMBLY, No. 4004

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 4, 2020

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblywoman SHAVONDA E. SUMTER**

**District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)**

**Assemblywoman ANGELICA M. JIMENEZ**

**District 32 (Bergen and Hudson)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman Caputo**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic Task Force on Racial and Health Disparities.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/14/2020)**

1 AN ACT establishing the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)  
2 Pandemic Task Force on Racial and Health Disparities.

3

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

6

7 1. There is established the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-  
8 19) Pandemic Task Force on Racial and Health Disparities in the  
9 Department of Health.

10 a. The task force shall consist of 15 members as follows:

11 (1) the Chief Diversity Officer of New Jersey; a representative of  
12 the Department of Health whose duties or expertise includes  
13 expanding access by minority populations to clinically appropriate  
14 healthcare services or eliminating discrimination in the  
15 implementation of healthcare programs, policies, or initiatives; and  
16 a representative of the Office of Emergency Management;

17 (2) two members of the Senate, one of whom shall be a member  
18 of the New Jersey Black Legislative Caucus, and one of whom shall  
19 be a member of the New Jersey Latino Caucus, appointed by the  
20 Senate President;

21 (3) two members of the General Assembly, one of whom shall be  
22 a member of the New Jersey Black Legislative Caucus, and one  
23 whom shall be a member of the New Jersey Latino Caucus, appointed  
24 by the Speaker of the General Assembly; and

25 (4) 8 public members appointed by the Governor, who shall  
26 include: a representative of the New Jersey Institute for Social  
27 Justice; a representative of a federally qualified health center; a  
28 physician licensed to practice in this State who specializes in  
29 providing care to patients in the State's minority and vulnerable  
30 communities; a nurse licensed to practice in this State who  
31 specializes in providing care to patients in the State's minority and  
32 vulnerable communities who may be a school nurse; a representative  
33 of a general hospital located in the State's minority and vulnerable  
34 communities; a representative of the New Jersey Urban Mayor's  
35 Association; and two representatives of two different non-profit  
36 organizations that conduct research, education, and training on, and  
37 develop policy initiatives to, address health equity in this State.

38 b. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled  
39 in the same manner provided for the original appointments. The  
40 public members of the task force shall serve without compensation  
41 but may be reimbursed for traveling and other miscellaneous  
42 expenses necessary to perform their duties within the limits of funds  
43 made available to the task force for its purposes.

44 c. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable after the  
45 appointment of its members and shall select a chairperson and vice-  
46 chairperson from among its members. The chairperson shall appoint  
47 a secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

1 d. The task force may meet at the call of its chairperson and hold  
2 hearings, remotely, as appropriate, by telephone, computer, or other  
3 means of live audio or video communication, at the times and in the  
4 places it deems appropriate and necessary to fulfill its charge. The  
5 task force shall be entitled to call to its assistance, and avail itself of  
6 the services of the employees of, any State, county, or municipal  
7 department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require  
8 and as may be available to it for its purposes.

9 e. The Chief Diversity Officer of New Jersey shall consult with  
10 members of the Governor's cabinet on matters related to the  
11 functions of the task force, and shall invite representatives of any  
12 State department to attend hearings called by the chairperson of the  
13 task force, as appropriate.

14 f. The Department of Health shall provide staff services to the  
15 task force.

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17 2. The purpose of the task force shall be to:

18 a. conduct a thorough and comprehensive study on the reasons  
19 how the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the  
20 State's minority and vulnerable communities, and the short-term and  
21 long-term consequences of the pandemic on these communities;

22 b. improve existing data systems to ensure that the health  
23 information that is collected relating to COVID-19 infections and  
24 deaths, include specific race, ethnicity, and demographic identifiers  
25 to develop a better statistical understanding of how the COVID-19  
26 pandemic has affected the State's minority and vulnerable  
27 communities;

28 c. evaluate the issues relating to the quality of, and access to,  
29 treatment and services provided to various racial and ethnic  
30 populations in the State during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

31 d. develop effective strategies to:

32 (1) address the racial, ethnic, and health disparities, and historical  
33 and systematic inequalities pertaining to race and ethnicity that have  
34 amplified the death rate in the State's minority and vulnerable  
35 communities during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

36 (2) reduce and eliminate disparities among the various racial and  
37 ethnic populations within the State's minority and vulnerable  
38 communities with respect to health status, access to high-quality  
39 health care, and utilization of health care services.

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41 3. a. No later than one year after the public health emergency  
42 declared pursuant to P.L.2005, c.222 (C.26:13-1 et seq.) in response  
43 to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is lifted, the task force  
44 shall report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991,  
45 c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature, on the activities of the task  
46 force and its findings and recommendations on strategies to:

47 (1) address the racial, ethnic, and health disparities and historical  
48 and systematic inequalities pertaining to race and ethnicity that have

1 amplified the death rate in the State's minority and vulnerable  
2 communities during the COVID-19 pandemic;

3 (2) address the short- and long-term consequences of the COVID-  
4 19 pandemic on the State's minority and vulnerable communities;  
5 and

6 (3) reduce and eliminate disparities among the various racial and  
7 ethnic populations within the State's minority and vulnerable  
8 communities with respect to health status, access to high-quality  
9 health care, and utilization of health care services.

10 b. The task force shall expire 30 days after the issuance of its  
11 report.

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13 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

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#### STATEMENT

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18 This bill establishes the 15-member Coronavirus Disease 2019  
19 (COVID-19) Pandemic Task Force on Racial and Health Disparities  
20 in the Department of Health.

21 The membership of the advisory council will consist of: the Chief  
22 Diversity Officer of New Jersey; a representative of the Department  
23 of Health whose duties or expertise includes expanding access by  
24 minority populations to clinically appropriate healthcare services or  
25 eliminating discrimination in the implementation of healthcare  
26 programs, policies, or initiatives; and a representative from the  
27 Office of Emergency Management; two members of the Senate, one  
28 of whom shall be a member of the New Jersey Black Legislative  
29 Caucus, and one of whom shall be a member of the New Jersey  
30 Latino Caucus, appointed by the Senate President; two members of  
31 the General Assembly, one of whom shall be a member of the New  
32 Jersey Black Legislative Caucus, and one whom shall be a member  
33 of the New Jersey Latino Caucus, appointed by the Speaker of the  
34 General Assembly; and 8 public members appointed by the  
35 Governor, who includes: a representative of the New Jersey Institute  
36 for Social Justice; a representative of a federally qualified health  
37 center; a physician licensed to practice in this State who specializes  
38 in providing care to patients in the State's minority and vulnerable  
39 communities; a nurse licensed to practice in this State who  
40 specialized in providing care to patients in the State's minority and  
41 vulnerable communities who may be a school nurse; a representative  
42 of a general hospital located in the State's minority and vulnerable  
43 communities; a mayor of a city located in the State's minority and  
44 vulnerable communities who is a member of the Urban Mayor's  
45 Association; and two representatives of two different non-profit  
46 organizations that conduct research, education, and training on, and  
47 develop policy initiatives to, address health equity in this State.

1       The purpose of the task force will be to: conduct a thorough and  
2 comprehensive study on the reasons how the COVID-19 pandemic  
3 has disproportionately affected the State’s minority and vulnerable  
4 communities, and the short-term and long-term consequences of the  
5 pandemic on these communities; investigate and evaluate strategies  
6 to address the racial, ethnic, and health disparities, and historical and  
7 systematic inequalities pertaining to race and ethnicity that have  
8 amplified the death rate in the State’s minority and vulnerable  
9 communities; improve existing data systems to ensure that the health  
10 information that is collected relating to COVID-19 infections and  
11 deaths, include specific race, ethnicity, and demographic identifiers  
12 to develop a better statistical understanding of how the COVID-19  
13 pandemic has affected the State’s minority and vulnerable  
14 communities; evaluate the issues relating to the quality of, and access  
15 to, treatment and services provided to various racial and ethnic  
16 populations in the State during the COVID-19 pandemic; and  
17 develop effective strategies to: address the racial, ethnic, and health  
18 disparities, and historical and systematic inequalities pertaining to  
19 race and ethnicity that have amplified the death rate in the State’s  
20 minority and vulnerable communities during the COVID-19  
21 pandemic; and reduce and eliminate disparities among the various  
22 racial and ethnic populations within the State’s minority and  
23 vulnerable communities with respect to health status, access to high-  
24 quality health care, and utilization of health care services.

25       Finally, the bill requires the task force to: report to the Governor  
26 and the Legislature, no later than one year after the COVID-19 public  
27 health emergency is lifted, on its findings and recommendations; and  
28 expire 30 days after the issuance of its report.