

ASSEMBLY, No. 5214

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 7, 2021

Sponsored by:

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District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

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District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

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District 25 (Morris and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Task Force for the Development of Universal Child Care.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/22/2021)

1 AN ACT establishing a Task Force for the Development of
2 Universal Child Care.

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. In the United States, approximately 60 percent of households
9 with children do not have a stay-at-home parent, and center-based
10 child care for an infant in three out of five states costs more than
11 tuition and fees at four-year public universities.

12 b. Researchers have established that early childhood, beginning
13 in infancy, is a period in which profound advances take place in a
14 child's reasoning, language acquisition, and problem solving, and
15 more importantly, that a child's environment can dramatically
16 influence the degree and pace of these advances.

17 c. By supporting early childhood development, high quality
18 child care programs can advance early foundational skills, improve
19 high school graduation rates and employment income, and reduce
20 health risks for the children who attend such programs.

21 d. More than half of all Americans live in child care "deserts,"
22 which are communities without an adequate number of licensed
23 child care options and where the costs of available child care
24 options are high. For example, the average family with one child
25 spends as much as 36 percent of its total annual income on child
26 care. This percentage increases for single parent households and
27 families with multiple children enrolled in child care.

28 e. A study published in the journal *Socius* found that in states
29 where child care is more affordable and school days are longer,
30 more mothers work than in states where child care costs are high
31 and school days are short.

32 f. Research has also shown that in industrialized countries,
33 subsidized child care has the single biggest effect on women's
34 employment. Lowering the cost of high-quality child care can
35 significantly increase mothers' employment rates and incomes.

36 g. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has
37 exacerbated the deficiencies of the child care market. Many child
38 care providers face economic hardship due to reduced student
39 enrollment and higher operating costs associated with enhanced
40 cleaning protocols and mandated personal protective equipment for
41 facility staff.

42 h. According to an analysis from the Center for American
43 Progress, the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to a permanent loss
44 of nearly 4.5 million child care slots nationwide, leaving millions of
45 families without the child care they need to return to work.

46 i. The educational and economic benefits of high quality,
47 affordable, and accessible child care can have lasting positive

1 impacts on children and their families, and can provide a seven to
2 10 percent return on a state's investment.

3 j. It is therefore in the best interests of the State to develop a
4 framework upon which a system of universal child care can be
5 established in order to address the major structural deficiencies in
6 the State's child care infrastructure that has been worsened by the
7 COVID-19 pandemic, improve the educational outcomes of those
8 children who would receive services from such a system, and
9 enhance the employment outcomes of their families.

10

11 2. a. There is established the Task Force for the Development
12 of Universal Child Care in the Department of Children and
13 Families.

14 b. The task force shall consist of 19 members as follows:

15 (1) the Commissioners of Children and Families, Community
16 Affairs, Education, Health, Human Services, Labor and Workforce
17 Development, and the Director of the Division on Women in the
18 Department of Children and Families, or their designees, who shall
19 serve ex officio;

20 (2) eight public members appointed by the Governor who shall
21 include a representative of the Advocates for Children of New
22 Jersey, a representative of the Child Care Advisory Council, a
23 representative of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association,
24 a representative of the New Jersey Association for the Education of
25 Young Children, one member with experience, training, or other
26 interests in child care issues, an operator of a licensed child care
27 center, a family day care provider, and an approved home provider;
28 and

29 (3) two public members appointed by the Senate President, one
30 whom shall be a parent of a child receiving child care services at a
31 licensed child care center, and one whom shall be a director of a
32 licensed child care center, and two public members appointed by
33 the Speaker of the General Assembly, one of whom shall be a
34 parent of a child receiving child care services from an in-home
35 provider, and one whom shall be teacher at a licensed child care
36 center.

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

43 d. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable but no
44 later than 60 days following the appointment of its members and
45 shall select a chairperson and vice-chairperson from among the
46 members.

47 The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a
48 member of the task force.

1 e. The task force may meet at the call of its chair and hold
2 hearings at the times and in the places it deems appropriate and
3 necessary to fulfill its charge. The task force shall be entitled to
4 call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees
5 of any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau,
6 commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available to
7 it for its purposes.

8 f. The Department of Children and Families shall provide staff
9 services to the task force, as may be necessary for the task force to
10 carry out its duties.

11 g. As used in this act, “universal child care” means a cohesive
12 system of state-run, licensed child care centers, family day care
13 homes, and approved home providers delivering child care services
14 to children from birth to entry into kindergarten, regardless of
15 family income, for up to six days a week, including summers and
16 holidays.

17
18 3. The task force shall develop a framework upon which a
19 universal child care system can be established in the State. The task
20 force shall:

21 (1) conduct a comprehensive study identifying policies,
22 procedures, practices, and financial priorities relating to child care
23 services in the State and the gaps in those policies, procedures,
24 practices, and financial priorities;

25 (2) study and evaluate aspects of the provision of child care that
26 may contribute to the lack of access to, and the high cost of, quality
27 child care services;

28 (3) review existing research, studies, and data concerning
29 universal child care and how the establishment of a universal child
30 care system can increase the accessibility and availability of
31 affordable, high quality child care in the State;

32 (4) evaluate a variety of potential financial incentives to
33 encourage private investment in a Statewide universal child care
34 system;

35 (5) analyze the relationship between the lack of investment in
36 child care infrastructure including, but not limited to, facility
37 upgrades, and the lack of access to affordable, high quality child
38 care;

39 (6) develop a process to evaluate the services, initiatives, and
40 programs provided through, and funded by, a universal child care
41 system based on the following core principles:

42 (i) the recruitment, hiring, and training of qualified child care
43 providers who are compensated appropriately;

44 (ii) the expansion of supports to help all families access
45 affordable, high-quality child care through significant public
46 investment to ensure the financial viability of licensed child care
47 centers, family day care homes, approved home providers; and

1 (iii) the remediation of structural inequalities within the State's
2 child care infrastructure that hinder access to affordable, high
3 quality child care.

4
5 4. a. The task force shall issue a report to the Governor, and to
6 the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-
7 19.1), no later than six months after the task force organizes. The
8 report shall contain the task force's findings and recommendations.

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

11
12 5. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon
13 the issuance of the task force report.

14 15 16 STATEMENT

17
18 This bill establishes a Task Force for the Development of Universal
19 Child Care in the Department of Children and Families. The
20 purpose of the task force is to develop a framework upon which a
21 universal child care system can be established in the State. The task
22 force will consist of 17 members as follows: the Commissioners of
23 Children and Families, Community Affairs, Education, Health,
24 Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, and the
25 Director of the Division on Women in the Department of Children
26 and Families, or their designees, who are to serve ex officio; eight
27 public members appointed by the Governor who are to include a
28 representative of the Advocates for Children of New Jersey, a
29 representative of the Child Care Advisory Council, a representative
30 of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, a
31 representative of the New Jersey Association for the Education of
32 Young Children, one member with experience, training, or other
33 interests in child care issues, an operator of a licensed child care
34 center, a family day care provider, and an approved home provider;
35 and two public members appointed by the Senate President, one
36 whom is a parent of a child receiving child care services at a
37 licensed child care center, and one whom is a director of a licensed
38 child care center, and two public members appointed by the Speaker
39 of the General Assembly, one whom is a parent of a child receiving
40 child care services from an in-home provider, and one whom is
41 teacher at a licensed child care center.

42 The task force will: conduct a comprehensive study identifying
43 policies, procedures, practices, and financial priorities relating to
44 child care services in the State and the gaps therein; study and
45 evaluate aspects of the child care industry that may contribute to the
46 lack of access to, and the high cost of, quality child care services;
47 review existing research, studies, and data concerning universal
48 child care and how the establishment of a universal child care

1 system can increase the accessibility and availability of affordable,
2 high quality child care in the State; evaluate a variety of potential
3 financial incentives to encourage private investment in a Statewide
4 universal child care system; analyze the relationship between the
5 lack of investment in child care infrastructure including, but not
6 limited to, facility upgrades, and the lack of access to affordable,
7 high quality child care; and develop a process to evaluate the
8 services, initiatives, and programs provided through, and funded by,
9 a universal child care system based on the following core
10 principles: the recruitment, hiring, and training of qualified child
11 care providers who are compensated appropriately; the expansion of
12 supports to help all families access affordable, high-quality child
13 care by making significant public investment to ensure the financial
14 viability of licensed child care centers, family day care homes,
15 approved home providers; and the remediation of structural
16 inequalities within the State's child care infrastructure that hinder
17 access to affordable, high quality child care.

18 As used in the bill, "universal child care" means a cohesive
19 system of state-run, licensed child care centers, family day care
20 homes, and approved home providers delivering child care services
21 to children from birth to entry into kindergarten, regardless of
22 family income, for up to six days a week, including summers and
23 holidays.

24 The task force is to issue a report to the Governor, and to the
25 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1),
26 no later than six months after the task force organizes, containing
27 the task force's findings and recommendations, and expire 30 days
28 after the report's issuance.