ASSEMBLY, No. 5372

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman WILLIAM F. MOEN, JR.
District 5 (Camden and Gloucester)
Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO
District 20 (Union)
Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON
District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle, Assemblymen DePhillips and Verrelli

SYNOPSIS

Creates COVID-19 Memorial Commission.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/8/2021)

AN ACT creating a COVID-19 Memorial Commission and supplementing Title 26 of the Revised Statutes.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

The COVID-19 outbreak was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei, China, in December 2019, and spread across the United States and the world. The outbreak was recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020, and on March 9, 2020, Governor Murphy signed an executive order declaring a State of Emergency and Public Health Emergency.

Statistics show that, as of February 1, 2021, New Jersey had approximately 700,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and approximately 21,500 deaths related to COVID-19. The highly contagious nature of the COVID-19 virus prevented many from spending time with their friends and loved ones, especially those who died alone and afraid in hospitals and nursing homes. The highly contagious nature of the virus also prevented many from giving their loved ones a proper burial or funeral service, preventing a final and peaceful goodbye.

Most New Jerseyans know someone, whether directly or indirectly, who was affected by COVID-19. The establishment of a memorial to honor the New Jersey residents whose lives were lost to COVID-19 is necessary and appropriate.

2. There is established in the Department of Health a COVID-19 Memorial Commission. The memorial will honor the New Jersey residents whose lives were lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The commission shall be responsible for the design and construction of the memorial.

The commission shall consist of 11 members as follows: the Commissioner of the Department of Health, the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, and the State Treasurer, who shall serve ex officio, or their designees; one public member to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one public member to be appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate; one public member to be appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly; one public member to be appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly; and four public members to be appointed by the Governor, of which at least one shall have experience in the design, construction, or maintenance of memorials, and at least one shall have either been diagnosed with COVID-19 or had a family member die from COVID-19. The eight public members shall be residents of the State.

A vacancy in the membership shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment. The public members shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for necessary and

reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the commission for its purposes.

The commission shall organize as soon as practicable following the appointment of a majority of its public members and shall select a chairperson and a vice chairperson from among its public members. The members shall select a secretary and a treasurer, who need not be members of the commission. The same person may be selected to serve as both secretary and treasurer.

The commission may meet and hold hearings at such places as it shall designate. A meeting of the commission shall be called at the request of six of the commission's members, and six members of the commission shall constitute a quorum at any meeting thereof.

The Department of Health shall provide staff support to the commission. The commission 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 the commission may require and as may be available to the commission for its purposes.

3. The commission shall select a suitable design and location for the construction of a COVID-19 memorial dedicated to the New Jersey residents whose lives were lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and shall determine appropriate methods of financing the construction and maintenance of the memorial. The commission may initiate fund raising measures and may receive monetary donations for the memorial. Any money received by the commission for these purposes shall be deposited in the fund established by section 5 of this act.

4. There is established in the Department of the Treasury a special non-lapsing fund to be known as the "COVID-19 Memorial Fund." The fund shall be maintained as a separate account and administered by the Department of the Treasury to support the design, construction, and maintenance of the COVID-19 Memorial.

The fund shall be credited with any moneys received by the COVID-19 Memorial Commission as donations, and any moneys as may thereafter be donated or appropriated to the fund. All interest earned on moneys in the fund shall be credited to the fund.

5. This act shall take effect immediately, and sections 1 through 4 shall expire on the first day of the sixth month following the completion of the construction of the memorial, and section 5 shall remain in effect.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes a COVID-19 Memorial Commission in the

Department of Health. The memorial will honor the New Jersey residents whose lives were lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The commission will consist of 11 members and will be responsible for selecting a suitable design and location for the construction of a COVID-19 memorial, and determining appropriate methods of financing the construction and maintenance of the memorial. A non-lapsing fund will be established for the design, construction, and maintenance of the memorial.

The COVID-19 outbreak spread across the United States and the world. The outbreak was recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, and on March 9, 2020, Governor Murphy signed an executive order declaring a State of Emergency and Public Health Emergency.

Statistics show that, as of February 1, 2021, New Jersey had approximately 700,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and approximately 21,500 deaths related to COVID-19. The highly contagious nature of the virus prevented many from spending time with their friends and loved ones, especially those who died alone and afraid in hospitals and nursing homes. The highly contagious nature of the virus also prevented many from giving their loved ones a proper burial or funeral service, preventing a final and peaceful goodbye.

Most New Jerseyans know someone, whether directly or indirectly, who was affected by COVID-19. The establishment of a memorial to honor the New Jersey residents whose lives were lost to COVID-19 is necessary and appropriate.