

SENATE, No. 2410

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 7, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM

District 31 (Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

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

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



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 include
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,
24 appointed 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
33 representative of a general hospital located in the State's minority
34 and vulnerable communities; a representative of the New Jersey
35 Urban Mayor's Association; and two representatives of two
36 different non-profit organizations that conduct research, education,
37 and training on, and develop policy initiatives to, address health
38 equity in this State.

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

45 c. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable after the
46 appointment of its members and shall select a chairperson and vice-
47 chairperson from among its members. The chairperson shall
48 appoint 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
2 hold hearings, remotely, as appropriate, by telephone, computer, or
3 other means of live audio or video communication, at the times and
4 in the places it deems appropriate and necessary to fulfill its charge.
5 The task force shall be entitled to call to its assistance, and avail
6 itself of the services of the employees of, any State, county, or
7 municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it
8 may require 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.

16

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
21 and 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
33 historical and systematic inequalities pertaining to race and
34 ethnicity that have amplified the death rate in the State's minority
35 and vulnerable 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

- 1 have 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
4 COVID-19 pandemic on the State's minority and vulnerable
5 communities; 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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16 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
22 Chief Diversity Officer of New Jersey; a representative of the
23 Department of Health whose duties or expertise include expanding
24 access by minority populations to clinically appropriate healthcare
25 services or eliminating discrimination in the implementation of
26 healthcare programs, policies, or initiatives; and a representative
27 from the Office of Emergency Management; two members of the
28 Senate, one of whom shall be a member of the New Jersey Black
29 Legislative Caucus, and one of whom shall be a member of the New
30 Jersey Latino Caucus, appointed by the Senate President; two
31 members of the General Assembly, one of whom shall be a member
32 of the New Jersey Black Legislative Caucus, and one whom shall be
33 a member of the New Jersey Latino Caucus, appointed by the
34 Speaker of the General Assembly; and 8 public members appointed
35 by the Governor, who includes: a representative of the New Jersey
36 Institute for Social Justice; a representative of a federally qualified
37 health center; a physician licensed to practice in this State who
38 specializes in providing care to patients in the State's minority and
39 vulnerable communities; a nurse licensed to practice in this State
40 who specialized in providing care to patients in the State's minority
41 and vulnerable communities who may be a school nurse; a
42 representative of a general hospital located in the State's minority
43 and vulnerable communities; a mayor of a city located in the State's
44 minority and vulnerable communities who is a member of the
45 Urban Mayor's Association; and two representatives of two
46 different non-profit organizations that conduct research, education,
47 and training on, and develop policy initiatives to, address health
48 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
7 and systematic inequalities pertaining to race and ethnicity that
8 have amplified the death rate in the State’s minority and vulnerable
9 communities; improve existing data systems to ensure that the
10 health information that is collected relating to COVID-19 infections
11 and deaths, include specific race, ethnicity, and demographic
12 identifiers to develop a better statistical understanding of how the
13 COVID-19 pandemic has affected the State’s minority and
14 vulnerable communities; evaluate the issues relating to the quality
15 of, and access to, treatment and services provided to various racial
16 and ethnic populations in the State during the COVID-19 pandemic;
17 and develop effective strategies to: address the racial, ethnic, and
18 health disparities, and historical and systematic inequalities
19 pertaining to race and ethnicity that have amplified the death rate in
20 the State’s minority and vulnerable communities during the
21 COVID-19 pandemic; and reduce and eliminate disparities among
22 the various racial and ethnic populations within the State’s minority
23 and vulnerable communities with respect to health status, access to
24 high-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
27 public health emergency is lifted, on its findings and
28 recommendations; and expire 30 days after the issuance of its
29 report.