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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

d. The task force may meet at the call of its chairperson and hold hearings, remotely, as appropriate, by telephone, computer, or other means of live audio or video communication, at the times and in the places it deems appropriate and necessary to fulfill its charge. The task force 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 it may require and as may be available to it for its purposes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

d. develop effective strategies to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

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

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

The purpose of the task force will be to: conduct a thorough and comprehensive study on the reasons how the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the State's minority and vulnerable communities, and the short-term and long-term consequences of the pandemic on these communities; investigate and evaluate strategies to address the racial, ethnic, and health disparities, and historical and systematic inequalities pertaining to race and ethnicity that have amplified the death rate in the State's minority and vulnerable communities; improve existing data systems to ensure that the health information that is collected relating to COVID-19 infections and deaths, include specific race, ethnicity, and demographic identifiers to develop a better statistical understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the State's minority and vulnerable communities; evaluate the issues relating to the quality of, and access to, treatment and services provided to various racial and ethnic populations in the State during the COVID-19 pandemic; and develop effective strategies to: address the racial, ethnic, and health disparities, and historical and systematic inequalities pertaining to race and ethnicity that have amplified the death rate in the State's minority and vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic; and reduce and eliminate disparities among the various racial and ethnic populations within the State's minority and vulnerable communities with respect to health status, access to high-quality health care, and utilization of health care services.

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