

SENATE, No. 2854

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED AUGUST 27, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator NELLIE POU

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Senator LORETTA WEINBERG

District 37 (Bergen)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Turner

SYNOPSIS

Directs DOE to develop outreach program to encourage young women and minorities to pursue post-secondary degrees and careers in STEM.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/14/2021)

1 **AN ACT** establishing a STEM outreach program and supplementing
2 chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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. The science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
9 (STEM) field has become extremely important for the success of
10 the innovation economy both in New Jersey and the United States,
11 and STEM education is critical in developing a globally competitive
12 workforce in the 21st century.

13 b. Despite the increasing demand for workers with experience
14 in STEM, women and minority groups are largely underrepresented
15 in the STEM workforce and in STEM education at the post-
16 secondary level.

17 c. According to the National Science Foundation's Science and
18 Engineering Indicators for 2016, women comprised only 29 percent
19 of the science and engineering workforce, despite making up half of
20 the total college-educated workforce in the United States.

21 d. The gender gap in the national STEM workforce is also
22 evidenced in New Jersey as women made up only 25.1 percent of
23 the State's STEM workforce in October 2018, according to the New
24 Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

25 e. Although women comprise more than half of the nation's
26 college students, they are underrepresented in many STEM-related
27 post-secondary degree programs, especially in engineering and the
28 computer sciences.

29 f. Racial and ethnic minorities are similarly underrepresented
30 in the STEM field as Hispanics, blacks, and Native
31 Americans/Alaska Natives make up a smaller share of the science
32 and engineering workforce (11 percent) than their proportion in the
33 general population (27 percent of the United States working age 33
34 population).

35 g. In 2012, only 11.2 percent of bachelor's degrees in science
36 and engineering, 8.2 percent of master's degrees in science and
37 engineering, and 4.1 percent of doctorate degrees in science and
38 engineering were awarded to minority women.

39 h. Encouraging young women and minorities to pursue post-
40 secondary degrees and careers in STEM professions and increasing
41 opportunities in the STEM field are important means for realizing
42 greater economic innovation, success, and equality.

43
44 2. a. The Department of Education, in consultation with the
45 Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and the Commission on
46 Science, Innovation and Technology, shall develop and administer
47 an outreach program to encourage young women and minorities to

1 pursue post-secondary degrees and careers in science, technology,
2 engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

3 b. The department, in developing and administering the
4 outreach program, shall:

5 (1) provide elementary and secondary school students,
6 especially young women and minorities, with opportunities to
7 increase their exposure to the STEM field;

8 (2) distribute various printed materials to schools, encouraging
9 young women and minorities to pursue post-secondary degrees and
10 careers in STEM;

11 (3) organize and conduct mentoring sessions, in which
12 individuals working or pursuing a post-secondary degree in the
13 STEM field engage with elementary and secondary school students;

14 (4) establish a mentoring program that partners STEM
15 professionals and STEM post-secondary students with elementary
16 and secondary school students;

17 (5) create programs to increase the recruitment and retention of
18 underrepresented faculty in STEM subject areas; and

19 (6) undertake any other activities the Commissioner of
20 Education, in consultation with the Secretary of Higher Education
21 and the chair of the Commission on Science, Innovation and
22 Technology, deems necessary to effectuate the purposes of the
23 outreach program.

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25 3. This act shall take effect 30 days after enactment.

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STATEMENT

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30 As reported, this bill directs the Department of Education
31 (department), in consultation with the Office of the Secretary of
32 Higher Education and the Commission on Science, Innovation and
33 Technology, to develop and administer an outreach program to
34 encourage young women and minorities to pursue post-secondary
35 degrees and careers in the science, technology, engineering, and
36 mathematics (STEM) fields. In developing and administering the
37 outreach program, the department is to, at a minimum: 1) provide
38 elementary and secondary school students, especially young women
39 and minorities, with opportunities to increase their exposure to the
40 STEM fields; 2) distribute various printed materials to schools,
41 encouraging young women and minorities to pursue post-secondary
42 degrees and careers in the STEM fields; 3) organize and conduct
43 STEM mentoring sessions; 4) establish a STEM mentoring program;
44 and 5) create programs to increase the recruitment and retention of
45 underrepresented faculty in STEM subject areas.

46 This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session
47 pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes
48 required by technical review, which has been performed.