

CHAPTER 181

AN ACT establishing the Chronic Absenteeism Task Force.

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

1. a. There is established the “Chronic Absenteeism Task Force,” to assess chronic absenteeism in the State’s public schools.

b. The task force shall consist of 20 members as follows:

(1) the Commissioner of Education, ex officio, or a designee;

(2) four members of the public, each of whom has specialized knowledge or expertise in issues related to the work of the task force. One of the public members shall be appointed by the Governor upon recommendation by the Senate President, one shall be appointed by the Governor upon recommendation by the Senate Minority Leader, one shall be appointed by the Governor upon recommendation by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and one shall be appointed by the Governor upon recommendation by the Assembly Minority Leader; and

(3) 15 public members appointed by the Governor. Eleven of the 15 public members shall include: one member of the State Board of Education; one member upon the recommendation of the New Jersey Education Association; one member upon the recommendation of the American Federation of Teachers New Jersey; one member upon the recommendation of the New Jersey School Boards Association; one member upon the recommendation of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association; one member upon the recommendation of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators; one member upon the recommendation of the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network; one member upon the recommendation of the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association; one member upon the recommendation of the Jobs for America’s Graduates New Jersey; one member upon the recommendation of the Princeton Area Community Foundation; and one member upon the recommendation of the Garden State Coalition of Schools.

c. The appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members of the task force within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the task force for its purposes.

d. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable, but no later than 30 days following the appointment of its members. The task force shall choose a chairperson from among its members. The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task force. A majority of the authorized membership shall constitute a quorum.

e. The Department of Education shall provide stenographic, clerical, and other administrative assistants, and any professional staff as the task force requires to carry out its work. The task force may request the assistance and 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 for its purposes.

2. It shall be the duty of the Chronic Absenteeism Task Force to:

a. examine and compare current and pre-pandemic data on chronic absenteeism in the State;

b. analyze the root causes of chronic absenteeism, which may include, but are not limited to, barriers to attendance, aversion to school, disengagement from school, and misconceptions about the impact of absences;

c. examine the role of mental health and school climate in chronic absenteeism rates;

- d. analyze and develop recommendations regarding the impact of absences due to exposure to COVID-19 and student discipline policies;
- e. research best practices that other states have implemented to address chronic absenteeism that may be replicated in the State; and
- f. develop recommendations on the most effective ways for school districts to promote family engagement to combat chronic absenteeism.

3. The Chronic Absenteeism Task Force shall issue a final report to the Governor, and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than one year after the organization of the task force. The report shall contain the task force's findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for legislation that it deems appropriate.

4. This act shall take effect immediately, and the task force shall expire 30 days after the issuance of its final report.

Approved December 23, 2025.