

# SENATE, No. 555

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator RICHARD J. CODEY**

**District 27 (Essex and Morris)**

**Senator JAMES BEACH**

**District 6 (Burlington and Camden)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Senators Turner and Gopal**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes task force to examine public school programs and services designed to address student mental health.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As reported by the Senate Education Committee with technical review.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/11/2021)**

1    **AN ACT** establishing a Task Force on Student Mental Health.

2

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

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6       1. a. There is established the Task Force on Student Mental  
7 Health. The purpose of the task force is to examine issues related to  
8 the mental health of public school students, including depression,  
9 anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma  
10 or disorder and to develop recommendations to ensure that students  
11 have access to mental health care programs and services in order to  
12 allow those students to meet their educational goals.

13       b. The task force shall consist of 16 members as follows:

14       (1) the Commissioner of Education, ex officio, or a designee,  
15 and the Director of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction  
16 Services, or a designee;

17       (2) one public member appointed by the President of the Senate  
18 and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the  
19 Senate, both of whom shall have demonstrated expertise in issues  
20 related to the work of the task force;

21       (3) one public member appointed by the Speaker of the General  
22 Assembly and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader  
23 of the General Assembly, both of whom shall have demonstrated  
24 expertise in issues relating to the work of the task force; and

25       (4) 10 members appointed by the Governor, including: a school  
26 board member, a school principal, a school administrator, an  
27 elementary school teacher, a high school teacher, a school  
28 counselor, a school social worker, and a school psychologist, all of  
29 whom are currently employed in public schools in the State; and  
30 two parents of students enrolled in a public school.

31

32       2. Appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days  
33 after the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of  
34 the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original  
35 appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve  
36 without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary  
37 expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members  
38 of the task force within the limits of funds appropriated or  
39 otherwise made available to the task force for its purposes.

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41       3. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable, but not  
42 later than 30 days following the appointment of its members. The  
43 task force shall choose a chairperson from among its members and  
44 shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task  
45 force.

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47       4. The Department of Education shall provide such  
48 stenographical, clerical, and other administrative assistants, and

1 such professional staff as the task force requires to carry out its  
2 work. The task force also shall be entitled to call to its assistance  
3 and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State,  
4 county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or  
5 agency as it may require and as may be available for its purposes.

6  
7 5. It shall be the duty of the task force to examine issues  
8 related to the mental health of students enrolled in public schools  
9 and to develop recommendations to ensure that students have access  
10 to necessary mental health care programs and services. The task  
11 force shall study and make recommendations regarding the  
12 following:

13 a. the identification of public school students who experience  
14 depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional  
15 tension, trauma, or disorder;

16 b. the evaluation and expansion of counseling programs and  
17 services available to students experiencing mental health  
18 difficulties, and other programs designed to address issues related to  
19 student mental health;

20 c. the relationship of student mental health to school safety and  
21 security;

22 d. the amount of funding that may be necessary for public  
23 schools to employ the appropriate staff and to establish new  
24 programs or expand existing programs necessary to address student  
25 mental health;

26 e. an examination of other states which have implemented  
27 programs that have successfully addressed depression, anxiety,  
28 stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or  
29 disorder among public school students and reduced the number of  
30 students experiencing such difficulties; and

31 f. any other proposals that the task force determines would  
32 provide for increased access to high-quality mental health programs  
33 and services by public school students.

34  
35 6. a. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings  
36 and recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature  
37 pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later  
38 than one year after the task force organizes.

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

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42 7. This act shall take effect immediately.