

CHAPTER 117

AN ACT establishing the “New Jersey One Health Task Force,” and supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes.

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

C.4:1-49 Findings, declaration relative to “One Health”.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. The term “One Health” reflects the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and the environment;
 - b. The strong connections and interdependency between human, companion animal, livestock, and ecosystem health are recognized in the One Health initiative framework, which facilitates addressing complex, multi-disciplinary issues such as zoonotic diseases, vector-borne diseases, and antimicrobial resistance;
 - c. Existing One Health initiatives at the federal level include the One Health Office established by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the One Health Coordination Center established by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and worldwide more than 950 prominent scientists, physicians, and veterinarians have endorsed the One Health initiative;
 - d. Awareness and collaboration among disciplines will help protect the environment, the health of all species, save lives in present and future generations, and increase quality of life, physical and mental health, and productivity;
 - e. The term “One Health” recognizes that the health of people is connected to the health of animals and the environment and is described as a collaborative, multi-sector, and transdisciplinary approach, working at the local, regional, national, and global levels, with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment;
 - f. One Health is not a new concept, but it has become increasingly important in recent years as many factors have changed interactions between people, animals, and the environment, leading to the emergence or reemergence of many diseases;
 - g. A One Health approach is important because: six out of every 10 infectious diseases in humans are spread from animals; animals can sometimes serve as early warning signs of potential illness in people; and public health preparedness depends on agriculture in a variety of ways, including the cultivation of a wide-range of vaccines in poultry eggs; and
 - h. It is, therefore, in the public interest for the State to establish a permanent New Jersey One Health Task Force to promote the health and wellness of New Jersey’s residents, animals, including pets, livestock, and wildlife, and natural resources by encouraging the collaborative efforts of experts and leveraging knowledge and resources effectively.

C.4:1-50 “New Jersey One Health Task Force”, established; goals, responsibilities.

2.
 - a. There is established the “New Jersey One Health Task Force” in the Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the task force shall be to develop a strategic plan to promote inter-disciplinary communication and collaboration between physicians, veterinarians, and other scientific professionals and State agencies, with the goal of promoting the health and well-being of the State’s residents, animals, and environment.
 - b. The goals and responsibilities of the task force shall include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) development of a plan to promote inter-disciplinary communication and collaboration between human, animal, and environment health professionals;

(2) development of protocols for the response to, and recovery from, zoonotic disease outbreaks in animals and humans;

(3) development of better diagnostic tests for zoonotic, vector-borne, and environmental diseases;

(4) collaboration among disciplines for development of effective xenosurveillance to identify genetic signatures of pathogens in vertebrates;

(5) promotion of and education concerning judicious antibiotic use by human, veterinary, and agriculture health professionals;

(6) investigation of antibiotic alternatives, such as bacteriophage therapy;

(7) coordination and collaboration among appropriate entities to develop new approaches to reduce hazards to human and animal health and to address public health threats in a manner that prevents duplication; and

(8) educational and outreach initiatives to promote the One Health approach across State government agencies, the State's academic and research institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and private entities.

c. In executing its responsibilities, the task force shall identify and partner with academic institutions and nongovernmental organizations in the State and consult with associations, organizations, and individuals who are knowledgeable about the One Health initiative.

C.4:1-51 Membership.

3. a. The New Jersey One Health Task Force shall consist of 13 members as follows:

(1) the Secretary of Agriculture, or the secretary's designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(2) the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, or the commissioner's designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(3) the Commissioner of Health, or the commissioner's designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(4) 10 public members to be appointed by the Governor, as follows:

(a) one person representing the medical community, who is a medical practitioner licensed to practice in the State;

(b) two people who are veterinarians licensed or approved to practice in the State by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, one of whom shall have expertise, knowledge, and experience with farm animals;

(c) one person with expertise, knowledge, and experience in medical research;

(d) one person with expertise, knowledge, and experience in zoonotic diseases;

(e) two people with expertise, knowledge, and experience in epidemiology or biomedical sciences; and

(f) three people representing the State's academic community with expertise, knowledge, and experience in public health, ecology, natural resources, or environmental and biological sciences.

b. Each public member of the task force shall serve for a term of four years, except that, of the members first appointed, two appointees shall serve for terms of four years, three appointees shall serve for terms of three years, three appointees shall serve for terms of two years, and two appointees shall serve for terms of one year. Each member shall hold office for the term of appointment, and until the member's successor is appointed and qualified.

Any vacancy in the task force membership shall be filled for the unexpired term, in the same manner provided for the original appointment. Members are eligible for reappointment to the task force.

c. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable after the appointment of a majority of its members, and shall select a chairperson and a vice-chairperson from among its members, as well as a secretary who need not be a member of the task force. A majority of the membership of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of task force business. The task force may meet and hold hearings at the place or places as it shall designate.

d. The members of the task force shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for travel and other necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the task force for its purposes.

e. The Department of Agriculture shall provide professional and clerical staff to the task force as may be necessary for the task force's purposes. The task force shall also be entitled to call upon the services of any State, county, or municipal department, board, commission, or agency, as may be available to it for its purposes.

f. The task force may solicit and receive grants and other funds that are made available for the task force's purposes by any governmental, public, private, not-for-profit, or for-profit agency, including funds that are made available under any federal or State law, regulation, or program.

C.4:1-52 Report to Governor.

4. Within 12 months after the task force's organizational meeting, and at least biennially thereafter, the task force shall submit a written report to the Governor, and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature, summarizing its work in the prior year, which report may include any recommendations for legislative or regulatory action to improve, promote, and protect the health and well-being of the State's residents, animals, and environment. Reports issued pursuant to this section shall be posted on the Internet website of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Health.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved June 24, 2021.