SYNOPSIS
Establishes task force to study the impact of and response to COVID-19 pandemic in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
AN ACT establishing a task force to study the impact of and response to the COVID-19 pandemic in New Jersey.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
   The COVID-19 outbreak spread across the United States and the world. The outbreak was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei, China, in December 2019, and was recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant health crisis for the residents of the State of New Jersey. New Jersey’s healthcare system was severely overburdened, and New Jersey’s financial health and the financial health of its residents was disrupted. Many businesses and government facilities closed, while others reduced operations. The schools in New Jersey closed, affecting teachers, students, and parents. The establishment of a task force to examine the impact and how the State of New Jersey responded to the crisis is necessary and appropriate.

2. There is established a task force, to be known as the “New Jersey COVID-19 Review Task Force,” to consist of 16 members. The Secretary of State, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Commissioner of the Department of Education, the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, and the State Treasurer, or their designees, shall serve as ex-officio members. The President of the Senate shall appoint two members, one of whom shall be a representative of the League of Municipalities, and one of whom shall be a representative of the New Jersey Hospital Association. The Minority Leader of the Senate shall appoint two members, one of whom shall be a member of the public with a child in the New Jersey school system, and one of whom shall be a member of the public with a child with a disability in the New Jersey school system. The Speaker of the General Assembly shall appoint two members, one of whom shall be a representative of the New Jersey Association of Counties, and one of whom shall be a representative of the New Jersey State Nurses Association. The Minority Leader of the General Assembly shall appoint two members, one of whom shall be a member of the public with a child in the New Jersey school system, and one of whom shall be a member of the public with a child with a disability in the New Jersey school system. The Governor shall appoint two members, one of whom shall be a representative of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, and one of whom shall be a member of the general public who resided in New Jersey during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The members of the task force shall be appointed and shall hold their initial organizational meeting within 45 days after the Governor declares an end to the COVID-19 State of Emergency. The members shall elect one of the members to serve as chair and one of the members to serve as vice-chair. The chair may appoint a secretary, who need not be a member of the task force. The members shall serve without compensation, but shall be eligible for reimbursement for necessary and reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the task force.

4. The task force shall meet at the call of the chair. The task force shall hold at least three public hearings in different parts of the State and elicit testimony from the public at such times and places as the chair shall designate. A meeting of the task force shall be called at the request of nine of the task force’s members and nine members of the task force shall constitute a quorum at any meeting thereof.

5. It shall be the duty of the task force to study the impact of, and New Jersey’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At a minimum, the task force shall:
   a. review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the State’s healthcare system;
   b. review the screening, assessment, testing, and restriction requirements utilized during the pandemic;
   c. analyze the financial impact of the pandemic on the State and its residents;
   d. review complaints of price gouging;
   e. assess the actions taken to reduce the risk of exposure and spread;
   f. assess the actions taken related to the education of students in the k-12 schools in the State, especially students with a disability; and
   g. consider such other matters as the members of the task force may deem appropriate.

6. The task force shall make recommendations for legislation or such other action as it deems appropriate with regard to improving, expanding, and facilitating a response to a Statewide or national medical emergency.

7. 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 for its purposes, and to employ stenographic and clerical assistance and incur traveling and other miscellaneous expenses as may be necessary in order to perform its
duties, within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the task force.

8. The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), and the Governor within eighteen months of its initial organizational meeting.

9. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire after the task force submits its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes a 16 member task force, to be known as the “New Jersey COVID-19 Review Task Force,” to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to New Jersey, and New Jersey response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a minimum, the task force will:

- review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the State’s healthcare system;
- review the screening, assessment, testing, and restriction requirements utilized during the pandemic;
- analyze the financial impact of the pandemic on the State and its residents;
- review complaints of price gouging;
- assess the actions taken to reduce the risk of exposure and spread;
- assess the actions taken related to the education of students in k-12 schools in the State, especially students with a disability; and
- consider such other matters as the members of the task force may deem appropriate.

The task force may make recommendations for legislation or such other action as it deems appropriate with regard to improving, expanding, and facilitating a response to a Statewide or national medical emergency.

The task force will report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor within eighteen months of its initial organizational meeting. The task force will expire after the submission of its report.