SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 56

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 14, 2022

Sponsored by:
Senator LINDA R. GREENSTEIN
District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS
Establishes commission to study effects of COVID-19 on small businesses.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
A JOINT RESOLUTION establishing a commission to study the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on small businesses.

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that has caused a global pandemic leading to unprecedented and overwhelming public health and economic crises; and

WHEREAS, In response to the devastating effect COVID-19 has had throughout the country, the President issued a declaration of a National State of Emergency on March 13, 2020 and announced social distancing measures in an effort to halt the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, The State of New Jersey, the state with the second highest incidence of COVID-19 in the United States, also enacted policies that required residents to remain at home and practice social distancing; and

WHEREAS, Social distancing, while effective at slowing the spread of COVID-19, has caused considerable economic disruption throughout the State and throughout the country, with many businesses forced to close or operate at reduced capacity; and

WHEREAS, The economic disruption caused by COVID-19 has had an especially detrimental effect on small businesses, which lack the resources and infrastructure available to larger companies to weather such economic difficulties; and

WHEREAS, The economic disruption has caused a ripple effect that has affected not only small businesses, which historically have been economic generators on their own, but also larger corporations who rely on their small business counterparts to act as customers and business counterparts; and

WHEREAS, These disruptions have caused financial hardships not only for small business owners, who have seen a reduction in income, but also for small business employees, who have faced layoffs, reduced hours, and furloughs; and

WHEREAS, Small businesses, those firms employing fewer than 100 employees, should be equipped with information and resources to better prepare and handle similar future scenarios; and

WHEREAS, A study focused on collecting data on the number and sizes of small businesses throughout the State and how the COVID-19 outbreak affected them, how many small businesses received aid in the forms of grants and loans during the COVID-19 outbreak, and data on minority, women, and veteran owned small businesses would greatly aid small businesses throughout the State; now, therefore,

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

1. a. There is hereby created a commission to be known as the "Small Business Assistance Commission." The purpose of the
commission shall be to study the economic hardships brought onto
the State, specifically small businesses, by the COVID-19 outbreak,
and look for solutions to better handle any negative effects in the
event of another similar scenario.

b. The commission shall consist of eleven members as follows:
   (1) Four members appointed by the Governor;
   (2) One member appointed by the President of the Senate;
   (3) One member appointed by the Speaker of the General
       Assembly;
   (4) One member appointed by the minority leader of the
       Senate;
   (5) One member appointed by the minority leader of the
       General Assembly;
   (6) One member appointed by the New Jersey Chamber of
       Commerce;
   (7) One member appointed by the New Jersey Business &
       Industry Association; and
   (8) One member appointed by the Chamber of Commerce
       Southern New Jersey.

Any vacancy in the membership of the commission shall be
filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was
made.

c. All appointments to the commission shall be made within 30
days of the effective date of this act. The commission shall
organize as soon as practicable after the appointment of its
members and shall select a chairperson from among the
members. The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not
be a member of the commission. The presence of a majority of the
members of the commission shall constitute a quorum.

d. The commission may meet at the call of its chairperson at
the times and in the places it may deem appropriate and necessary
to fulfill its duties, and may conduct public hearings at the places it
shall designate. The members of the commission shall serve without
compensation, but may be reimbursed, within the limits of funds
made available to the commission, for necessary travel expenses
incurred in the performance of their duties.

e. The commission 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 may be available to it for its purpose. The New
Jersey Business Action Center shall provide professional and
clerical staff to the commission, as may be necessary to effectuate
the purposes of this act.

f. As used in this resolution “Small Business” means firms
employing fewer than 100 employees.

g. A report summarizing the activities and findings of the
commission shall be submitted to the Governor and, pursuant to
section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature no later than 12 months following the date of the commission’s initial meeting.

h. The commission’s report shall include, but not be limited to, the commission’s findings related to: the largest struggles faced by New Jersey small businesses because of COVID-19 and the largest struggles as small businesses attempt to recover from the effects of COVID-19; the most helpful and least helpful government resources available to small businesses; the programs that were most effective to support small businesses in innovation; and small business personal protective equipment (PPE) needs.

2. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon submission of the commission’s final report to the Governor and Legislature.

STATEMENT

This resolution establishes a commission to study the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on small businesses. COVID-19, a novel coronavirus, has caused a global pandemic leading to an unprecedented and overwhelming public health crisis. In response to the devastating effect COVID-19 has had throughout the country, the President issued a declaration of a National State of Emergency on March 13, 2020 and announced social distancing measures in an effort to halt the spread of COVID-19. The State of New Jersey, the state with the second highest incidence of COVID-19 in the United States, also enacted policies that required residents to remain at home and practice social distancing. Social distancing, while effective at slowing the spread of COVID-19, has caused considerable economic disruption throughout the State and throughout the country, with many businesses forced to close or operate at reduced capacity. These disruptions have caused financial hardships for both small business owners, who have seen a reduction in income, and small business employees, who have faced layoffs, reduced hours, and furloughs. Furthermore, the economic disruption caused by COVID-19 has resulted in a ripple effect that has affected not only small businesses and their employees, which have historically economic generators on their own, but also larger corporations who rely on their small business counterparts act as customers and business counterparts.

Small businesses, those firms employing fewer than 100 employees, should be better equipped with information and access to resources to better handle similar future scenarios. A study focused on collecting data to review the number of small businesses that received grants and loans, such as those from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, along with information
pertaining to the number, size, and degree to which the business
was affected by the COVID-19 outbreak would greatly aid small
businesses across the State.