

ASSEMBLY, No. 4375

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 16, 2024

Sponsored by:

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District 22 (Somerset and Union)

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District 11 (Monmouth)

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SYNOPSIS

Directs Secretary of Higher Education to establish Legislative Youth Council and select institution of higher education in this State as host; makes changes to council's structure to provide flexibility in activities and operations.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/16/2024)

1 AN ACT concerning the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council,
2 amending P.L.2021, c.398, and repealing sections 6 through 9 of
3 P.L.2021, c.398.

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

7
8 1. Section 2 of P.L.2021, c.398 (C.52:13GG-2) is amended to
9 read as follows:

10 2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

11 a. Engagement and participation by our youth in civic life are
12 essential to maintaining the strength of our democracy, but the
13 youth of the United States may not believe that they have a
14 substantive voice in their government or the opportunities to share
15 their perspectives and opinions at the highest levels of our
16 government.

17 b. The unique perspectives and valuable insights of the youth
18 of this country are essential to ensuring that investments made by
19 the government for programs and services for those youth are
20 effective and efficient.

21 c. Many state legislatures and governors have created youth
22 councils that have proven to be an effective means of understanding
23 the perspectives and opinions of the youth of the state, leading to
24 more effective and efficient policies, programs, and services for
25 those youth.

26 d. This State historically has sought to involve youth at the
27 highest levels of government, including through a 1995 Youth
28 Advisory Council to the Governor, established by Executive Order
29 No. 34 (Whitman).

30 e. The creation of a new youth council in this State that can
31 advise both the New Jersey Legislature and State policymakers in
32 the Executive Branch will further develop an underutilized source
33 of leadership in communities throughout this State and will be
34 beneficial for the State and its resident youth.

35 (cf: P.L.2021, c.398, s.2)

36
37 2. Section 3 of P.L.2021, c.398 (C.52:13GG-3) is amended to
38 read as follows:

39 3. **【There is established】** a. The Secretary of Higher Education
40 shall establish a New Jersey Legislative Youth Council for the
41 purpose of providing a forum for the youth of this State to gain
42 access to and knowledge of policymaking, and to participate in the
43 democratic process **【**; to advise the Legislature and its committees,
44 commissions, and task forces on the perspectives, opinions, needs,
45 development, and welfare of the youth of the State; and to advise

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **【thus】 in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.**

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 the Legislature and its committees, commissions and task forces on
2 the most effective and efficient policies, programs, and services that
3 the State could provide for the youth of this State. The council
4 shall research, analyze, discuss, and make specific
5 recommendations in the areas of civics education; drugs and
6 substance use disorder; emotional and physical health; employment
7 and economic opportunities; environmental protection; gun violence
8 and school safety; homelessness and poverty; mental health; safe
9 environment for youth; sexual harassment and violence; youth
10 services; and youth bias and hate crimes.

11 In each two-year term of the New Jersey Legislature, the council
12 shall submit, in writing, a series of policy recommendations to the
13 President of the Senate, the Speaker of the General Assembly, the
14 Minority Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the
15 General Assembly. The series of policy recommendations shall be
16 made available online to the public.

17 The council may express its position publicly on legislation
18 pending before the New Jersey Legislature that is directly relevant
19 to the youth of this State.】

20 b. The Secretary of Higher Education shall identify an
21 institution of higher education located in the State to host, develop,
22 supervise, and provide administrative support to the council.

23 The institution of higher education shall appoint a coordinator
24 who shall oversee the council, in consultation with the Secretary,
25 when appropriate. The coordinator shall receive an annual stipend
26 in an amount to be determined by the Secretary.

27 The coordinator may select and invite qualified persons who are
28 considered subject matter experts to impart their knowledge,
29 provide guidance, and assist the council members in researching
30 and analyzing issues that the members determine to be of
31 significance for the youth in this State. The coordinator may also
32 work with State policymakers to arrange for meetings, observation
33 opportunities, and presentations that will allow for members to
34 experience first-hand the policymaking process and to provide input
35 directly to policymakers. The coordinator shall report biennially to
36 the Secretary of Higher Education and to the Legislature, pursuant
37 to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on the activities of
38 the council.

39 c. The Legislature shall appropriate sufficient funds in each
40 fiscal year for the administration of the council. Such
41 appropriations may be used for the stipends provided for in this act.
42 (cf: P.L.2023, c.177, s.138)

43
44 3. Section 4 of P.L.2021, c.398 (C.52:13GG-4) is amended to
45 read as follows:

46 4. a. The council shall be comprised of 【44 members. Forty
47 members shall be members of the public and four members shall be

1 members of the New Jersey Legislature] 40 members selected
2 pursuant to section 5 of P.L.2021, c.398 (C.52:13GG-5).

3 b. Each of the 40 [public] members shall have been a resident
4 of New Jersey for at least [15] 10 years and shall be between [15]
5 18 and [23] 25 years of age at the time of appointment.

6 Each [public] member shall represent one of the 40 districts of
7 the New Jersey Legislature.

8 The 40 [public] members shall be inclusive and reflective of the
9 racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural, and economic diversity of
10 their district.

11 [A public member who is less than 18 years of age shall be
12 required to provide written permission from a parent or legal
13 guardian to be a member of the council and participate in its
14 activities. Any public member who is less than 18 years of age
15 shall be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, or an adult
16 designated in writing by the parent or legal guardian, at all times
17 when attending meetings and other activities of the council.]

18 No [public] member shall be a family member, or an employee,
19 of a person who is holding, or who held in the five years prior to the
20 public member's appointment, any appointive or elective public
21 office of this State.

22 [Public members shall serve for a term of two years, and if
23 eligible, may be reappointed to serve for one additional term.

24 c. The President of the Senate shall appoint one member of the
25 Senate to serve on the council. The Speaker of the General
26 Assembly shall appoint one member of the General Assembly to
27 serve on the council. The Minority Leader of the Senate shall
28 appoint one member of the Senate to serve on the council. The
29 Minority Leader of the General Assembly shall appoint one member
30 of the General Assembly to serve on the council.

31 The legislative members shall serve a term coterminous with
32 their term of office, and at the pleasure of the President of the
33 Senate or the Speaker of the General Assembly.

34 The legislative members shall be non-voting, advisory members
35 appointed solely for the purpose of assisting the public members of
36 the council in conducting the council's meetings and activities, and
37 in fulfilling the council's purpose.

38 The legislative members shall advise the council on the
39 legislative process, provide policy and fiscal briefings, assist with
40 the drafting of proposed legislation, and provide such guidance and
41 information as the council deems appropriate.

42 d. The public members of the council shall serve until their
43 successors are appointed and qualified, and, for this purpose, a
44 public member may serve after reaching the age of 23 years. The
45 term of the successor of any incumbent public member shall be
46 calculated from the expiration of the term of that incumbent public
47 member. A vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term

1 shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment but
2 for the unexpired term only.

3 e.] c. For the purpose of the New Jersey Legislative Youth
4 Council:

5 "Appointive or elective public office" means an appointment by
6 the Governor that requires the advice and consent of the Senate, or
7 an appointment by the Governor to serve at the pleasure of the
8 Governor only during his or her term of office, an appointment by
9 an elected public official or elected governing body of a political
10 subdivision of the State, that requires the specific consent or
11 approval of the elected governing body of the political subdivision,
12 or any office filled at an election by the voters at a general election.

13 "Family member" means a child, sibling, niece, nephew, first
14 cousin, or grandchild, whether the individual is related by blood,
15 marriage, or adoption.

16 ["Youth" means a person at least 15 years of age but under the
17 age of 23 years.]

18 (cf: P.L.2021, c.398, s.4)

19

20 4. Section 5 of P.L.2021, c.398 (C.52:13GG-5) is amended to
21 read as follows:

22 5. [The legislative members shall be appointed within 60 days
23 after the creation of the council by law.] a. The [legislative
24 members initially] appointed coordinator shall develop an
25 application form and application process for the selection of the
26 [public] council members. [The application form and application
27 process may be revised by a majority vote of the public members
28 appointed to the council.]

29 b. The member of the Senate and the two members of the
30 General Assembly who represent each district of the New Jersey
31 Legislature shall appoint one person, based on the application
32 submitted by that person, to serve as a [public] member of the
33 council from among the persons residing in that legislative district
34 who submit applications. The [public] members shall be appointed
35 within 60 days of the [completion of the application form and
36 application process.

37 If no applications for public membership are received from
38 persons in a legislative district or there are no qualified applicants,
39 an additional 30 days to appoint a public member from that
40 legislative district shall be provided for the receipt of applications
41 from persons who reside in that legislative district] commencement
42 of each new two-year legislative term and shall serve only for that
43 legislative term.

44 c. Each council member shall receive a stipend in an amount to
45 be determined by the coordinator, in consultation with the Secretary
46 of Higher Education.

47 (cf: P.L.2021, c.398, s.5)

1 5. (New Section) An individual appointed to the council prior
2 to the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the
3 Legislature as this bill), who is eligible for appointment to the
4 council pursuant to the terms of this act, P.L. , c. (pending
5 before the Legislature as this bill), shall be deemed appointed to the
6 council for the two-year legislative term of the State Legislature
7 commencing on January 9, 2024.

8
9 6. Sections 6 through 9 of P.L.2021, c.398 (C.52:13GG-6
10 through C.52:13GG-9) are repealed.

11
12 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

13
14
15 STATEMENT

16
17 This bill makes changes to the Legislative Youth Council to
18 create flexibility and provide long-term support.

19 The bill:

20 Directs the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to
21 establish a Legislative Youth Council in collaboration with a
22 college or university located in this State, for the engagement of
23 youth in this State in the democratic process.

24 Directs the college or university selected by the Secretary to
25 provide support to council members so they can more effectively
26 undertake their responsibilities and provide input to policymakers.

27 Directs the college or university to designate a coordinator for
28 the council to manage the day to day functions, including arranging
29 for guest speakers and for opportunities to observe policymakers.

30 Establishes a stipend, in an amount to be determined by the
31 Secretary, for the coordinator.

32 Removes the requirement that the members study particular
33 subject areas, allowing the council to adapt over time and research
34 issues of greatest concern to them as representatives of the youth in
35 this State.

36 Removes the requirement that the council provide regular reports
37 to the Legislature on particular subjects but instead only requires
38 that the coordinator report to the Legislature and the Secretary of
39 Higher Education on the activities of the council once every two
40 years.

41 Aligns the term of the members with the two-year legislative
42 term for overlap with the schedule of legislative activity in this
43 State.

44 Removes legislators from formal positions with the council,
45 allowing for them and other policymakers to engage in a more
46 advisory capacity.

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- 1 Requires the coordinator to develop the application for
- 2 appointment to the council and removes the ability of the council to
- 3 revise that application.
- 4 Raises the minimum age for eligible applicants from 15 to 18
- 5 and the maximum age from 23 to 25 to create a cohort of council
- 6 members who are closer in experience and college level of
- 7 education to inform their activities.
- 8 Lowers the number of years that a member has to have been a
- 9 resident of this State to broaden the eligible pool of applicants.
- 10 Requires the members of the Senate and General Assembly to
- 11 appoint the members within 60 days after the start of a two-year
- 12 legislative term.
- 13 Removes the ability of the members of the Legislature to appoint
- 14 members after that initial 60 days to ensure that there is no delay in
- 15 participation for some of the members who are appointed later.
- 16 Establishes a stipend for council members in an amount to be
- 17 determined by the coordinator.
- 18 Provides that all members who have been appointed prior to the
- 19 enactment of the bill will constitute the inaugural council members,
- 20 as long as they would also be eligible under the terms of this bill,
- 21 and will begin their service with the new legislative term
- 22 commencing on January 9, 2024.
- 23 This bill also repeals several provisions of law that require the
- 24 council to maintain an executive board, that require a certain
- 25 schedule of meetings for the council, and that limit the payments
- 26 received by members to reimbursements for expenses already
- 27 incurred.