

CHAPTER 401

AN ACT requiring the Attorney General to create certain model policies protecting personal freedoms and supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

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

C.52:17B-4.20 Short title.

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Safe Communities Act.”

C.52:17B-4.21 Findings and declarations.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

- a. One of the founding principles of this nation is the freedom to worship in peace. Our religious institutions should be places where community members feel safe to convene. Individuals should not be deterred from attending their places of worship out of a general fear that their personal freedom to assemble for worship may be encumbered.

- b. Schools, hospitals, shelters, courthouses, and other essential government services should be safe and accessible to all eligible community members who are seeking services. Individuals should not be deterred from seeking services for which they are eligible because of a generalized fear of engaging with institutions.

- c. New Jersey is a healthier, safer, and more prosperous State when all residents access the services for which they are eligible. A coordinated effort by all relevant municipal, county, and State agencies is required to create conditions that empower residents to seek the help they need from public services, including education, health, and public safety services.

- d. The residents of this State should not hesitate to participate in worship services, attend school, appear in court, or seek necessary medical care, services, or shelter out of fear.

- e. Therefore, it is fitting and proper to direct State, county, and municipal entities to attend to local priorities rather than carrying out federal civil law enforcement initiatives for which they lack the requisite experience and that contravene the priorities of freedom and safety for New Jersey residents.

C.52:17B-4.22 Definitions.

3. As used in this act:

“Federal civil law enforcement” means any effort to investigate, enforce, or assist in the investigation or enforcement of any federal civil immigration law, and includes any effort to investigate, enforce, or assist in the investigation or enforcement of any violations of Title 8 of the United States Code.

“Health care facility” means the same as that term is defined by subsection a. of section 2 of P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-2).

“Office of social services” means an office or program operated or funded by, or under the auspices or authority of, the Department of Children and Families, Department of Community Affairs, Department of Health, or Department of Human Services.

“Place of worship” means an edifice used primarily as a place of public or private worship by a recognized and established religious sect or denomination registered as a not-for-profit organization pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. s.501(c)(3)).

C.52:17B-4.23 Model policies developed to ensure personal freedom in sensitive locations.

4.
 - a. The Attorney General, in consultation with appropriate government entities and stakeholders, shall develop model policies to ensure personal freedom in sensitive locations.

These locations shall include health care facilities, public schools, domestic violence shelters, emergency shelters, family shelters, youth shelters, food pantries, funeral homes, harm reduction sites, disaster and emergency response sites, offices of social services, correctional facilities, and courthouses to ensure these institutions remain safe and accessible to all State residents. To the fullest extent possible and consistent with State and federal law, these institutions shall adhere to the model policies developed by the Attorney General or policies that provide greater protections.

b. The Attorney General shall publish these model policies on the Internet website of the Department of Law and Public Safety no later than 180 days next following the enactment of this act.

c. The Commissioner of Children and Families, Commissioner of Community Affairs, Commissioner of Health, Commissioner of Human Services, Commissioner of Education, Commissioner of Corrections, and Administrative Director of the Courts shall adopt the model policies established pursuant to subsection b. of this section, or policies that provide greater protections, no later than 180 days after the model policies are issued.

(1) The Commissioner of Education shall require public schools, and shall request private schools, to adhere to model policies adopted pursuant to this section, or policies that provide greater protections. The commissioner also shall publish the adopted policies on the Internet website of the Department of Education.

(2) The Commissioner of Health shall require health care facilities to implement policies that provide protections similar to the model policies established pursuant to this section. The commissioner also shall publish the model policies established pursuant to this section on the Internet website of the Department of Health.

(3) The Commissioners of Community Affairs, Children and Families, and Human Services shall require offices of social services to adhere to model policies adopted pursuant to this section, or policies that provide greater protections. The commissioners also shall publish the adopted policies on the Internet websites of the Departments of Community Affairs, Children and Families, and Human Services.

(4) The Commissioner of Corrections shall require correctional facilities to adhere to model policies adopted pursuant to this section, or policies that provide greater protections. The commissioner also shall publish the adopted policies on the Internet website of the Department of Corrections.

(5) The Administrative Director of the Courts shall require courthouses to adhere to model policies adopted pursuant to this section, or policies that provide greater protections. The administrative director also shall publish the adopted policies on the Internet website of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

C.52:17B-4.24 Model policies developed for places of worship.

5. a. The Attorney General, in consultation with religious leaders within the State, shall develop a model policy that may be adopted, in whole or in part, by a place of worship to ensure that individuals are not deterred from entering the premises.

b. The model policy developed pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall be posted on the Internet website of the Department of Law and Public Safety no later than 180 days next following the enactment of this act.

6. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 20, 2026.