

## CHAPTER 46

AN ACT concerning public health and supplementing Title 26 of the Revised Statutes.

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

C.26:2FF-1 Findings, declarations.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. For over 25 years, New Jersey's public health leaders have pursued interest in establishing a public health institute dedicated to promoting health, well-being, and quality of life for people throughout New Jersey.

b. Public health institutes are typically independent, nonprofit organizations that collaborate with public and private sector stakeholders, philanthropists, charitable organizations, and other agencies to foster public health solutions and systematically improve the way health agencies and organizations respond to public health threats and inequities.

c. Across the United States, there are currently over 40 designated public health institutes working in partnership with State and local departments of health to enhance cross-sector initiatives and bridge gaps between health care and community services.

d. These existing public health institutes help states leverage and diversify the personnel, infrastructure, and resources needed to accelerate solutions to various forms of public health threats including, but not limited to, communicable disease outbreaks, chronic and sexually transmitted diseases, substance use epidemics, issues related to food access and security, and systemic racial inequities affecting health care.

e. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for a public health institute in New Jersey that can work with public and private health care officials and providers to ensure a coordinated, resilient, equitable response to any public health emergency or state of emergency.

f. In 2022, the Nicholson Foundation and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders from public health, healthcare, social services, and community organizations and issued a report entitled, "Seizing the Moment: How a Public Health Institute Would Advance Health Equity in New Jersey."

g. The report observed that New Jersey's public health infrastructure and system has been strained for several decades due to a lack of funding and insufficient coordination across health and related sectors and further noted that the impact of social and economic determinants of health have caused health inequities along racial, ethnic, income, and other fault lines

h. The report recommended the establishment of a public health institute in New Jersey centered around efforts to address the root causes of health disparities and inequities, create a more stable, robust, public health infrastructure that systemically advances health equity and quality of life for all, and provide timely and nimble administrative and operational support to New Jersey's public health agencies.

i. In order to support and sustain a relationship between State government and a public health institute, it is necessary to establish a framework by which the New Jersey Department of Health may engage in a public-private partnership with an organization that can serve as the State's "Public Health Institute."

j. The Public Health Institute will actively promote collaborative and community-driven partnerships designed to improve public health systems and services throughout the State.

k. The primary role of the Public Health Institute will be to collaborate with State departments and agencies, as well as private sector health care, academic, philanthropic, business and faith communities, and New Jersey's Regional Health Hubs, to coordinate and implement strategies in areas of policymaking, research and innovation, data collection,

workforce development, and community-based interventions and services, and to improve the overall state of public health in New Jersey, with a particular focus on eliminating racial disparities and inequities in public health.

C.26:2FF-2 Definitions.

2. As used in this act:

“Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Health.

“Department” means the Department of Health

“Public Health Institute” means an entity designated by the Department of Health as the State’s Public Health Institute pursuant to section 3 of P.L. 2025, c.46 (C.26:2FF-3).

C.26:2FF-3 Public Health Institute, purpose, objectives.

3. a. The Commissioner of Health shall designate a nonprofit entity to serve as the Public Health Institute pursuant to criteria established by the commissioner in accordance with this act.

b. The purpose and objective of the Public Health Institute shall be to:

(1) coordinate among national, State, and local agencies including, but not limited to, local and county health departments, Regional Health Hubs designated pursuant to P.L. 2019, c.517 (C.30:4D-8.16 et seq.), licensed health care facilities, public health-related advocacy and membership organizations, and private organizations for the purposes of promoting equitable public health services in New Jersey;

(2) provide timely and nimble administrative, operational, and fiscal support to public and private health agencies, community-based organizations, and other strategic partners;

(3) develop and implement projects, programs, initiatives, or services designed to improve public health outcomes, address racial disparities in public health, including the underlying systemic root causes of health disparities and inequities, and bridge gaps between public and private sector health care and community services;

(4) promote, support, and fund programs related to workforce development, education, applied research, policy development, and other initiatives that advance the purposes of the Public Health Institute;

(5) enter into contracts for the purchase of medical countermeasures, supplies or therapeutics, or other products or service agreements as may be necessary to aid the department in advancing or protecting the public health; and

(6) engage in charitable programs dedicated to the purposes and objectives of the Public Health Institute.

c. The commissioner shall establish criteria that an entity must satisfy to be designated as a Public Health Institute, which criteria shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(1) be a nonprofit organization located in New Jersey which is exempt from federal taxation pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. s.501(c)(3));

(2) be recognized by the National Network of Public Health Institutes or any successor accreditation body for public health institutes;

(3) possess the capacity to integrate and coordinate public health functions on a local, county, and Statewide level;

(4) maintain a network of personnel with expertise in the areas of health care data collection and analysis, health care policy, health care information systems, and public health research; and

(5) any other criteria established by the commissioner.

d. An entity designated as the Public Health Institute pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall enter into an agreement with the department requiring the entity to:

(1) comply with all applicable laws and regulations necessary to qualify for and maintain its nonprofit status, including, but not limited to, the “New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation Act,” N.J.S.15A:1-1 et seq., and section 501(c) of the federal Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. s.501(c));

(2) regularly consult with and give due consideration to the input and recommendations of the Department of Health and local health departments in carrying out its duties under this act;

(3) develop and submit to the department an operational plan that includes a mission statement that supports, complements, and supplements the missions of the department;

(4) submit to the department an initial startup plan of certain issues, projects, and action items the Public Health Institute shall pursue in the first three years of its designation;

(5) submit periodic planning documents and progress reports to the department at such intervals as may be determined by the commissioner;

(6) provide information, assistance, and services as may be required by the department in order to design, plan, implement, or coordinate any projects, programs, initiatives, or services that advance the mutual purposes of the department and the Public Health Institute;

(7) report any data collected or maintained by the Public Health Institute to the department, including data related to public health projects, programs, initiatives, or services, and any other information that may advance the mutual purposes of the department and the Public Health Institute, provided that such data is submitted to the department in a manner consistent with any applicable State and federal law, rule, regulation, or agreement; and

(8) comply with any other requirements as may be determined by the commissioner.

e. The commissioner may, as a condition of a nonprofit entity maintaining its designation as the Public Health Institute, require such nonprofit entity to perform such additional tasks or satisfy additional requirements on a continuing basis.

f. The commissioner may rescind the commissioner’s designation of the Public Health Institute in accordance with the terms of agreement entered into pursuant to subsection d. of this section.

#### C.26:2FF-4 Public Health Institute Fund.

4. There is created in the Department of Health a special, non-lapsing fund to be known as the Public Health Institute Fund. There shall be deposited into the fund the amounts made available for the purposes of the fund and monetary donations or grants that may be received from any source for the purposes of the fund and any interest earned thereon. Monies deposited in the fund shall be dedicated for the support and funding of the establishment and maintenance of the Public Health Institute and any projects, programs, initiatives, or services of the Public Health Institute.

5. The Commissioner of Health may adopt rules and regulations, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

6. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved April 22, 2025.