

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2945

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 11, 2024

Sponsored by:

Senator ANGELA V. MCKNIGHT

District 31 (Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes task force to examine school discipline practices including racial disparities and effectiveness.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Senate Education Committee on May 6, 2024, with amendments.



1 AN ACT establishing a task force to examine school discipline
2 practices.

3

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

6

7 1. a. There is established a task force for the purpose of
8 examining, evaluating, and making recommendations regarding
9 discipline policies and practices in New Jersey public schools,
10 including any racial disparities in the implementation of the policies
11 and the effectiveness of the policies.

12 b. The task force shall consist of the following ¹~~10~~ 11¹
13 members:

14 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee ¹, and the
15 Director of the Division on Civil Rights in the Department of Law
16 and Public Safety, or a designee¹;

17 (2) seven members appointed by the Governor, who shall
18 include: one member upon the recommendation of the New Jersey
19 School Boards Association; one member upon the recommendation
20 of the New Jersey Education Association; one member upon the
21 recommendation of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors
22 Association; one member upon the recommendation of the New
23 Jersey Association of School Administrators; one member upon the
24 recommendation of the American ¹~~Federal~~ Federation¹ of
25 Teachers New Jersey; one member upon the recommendation of the
26 New Jersey Charter Schools Association; and one member of the
27 public who has specialized knowledge or expertise in issues related
28 to school discipline practices; and

29 (3) one member of the public appointed by the ¹Governor upon
30 recommendation of the¹ President of the Senate and one member of
31 the public appointed by the ¹Governor upon recommendation of
32 the¹ Speaker of the General Assembly, both of whom have
33 specialized knowledge or expertise in issues related to school
34 discipline practices.

35 c. Appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days
36 of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the
37 task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original
38 appointments were made.

39 d. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation,
40 but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures incurred in the
41 performance of their duties as members of the task force within the
42 limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the task
43 force for its purposes.

44

45 2. a. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable, but
46 no later than 30 days following the appointment of its members.

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.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate SED committee amendments adopted May 6, 2024.

1 The task force shall choose a chairperson from among its members
2 and shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task
3 force.

4 b. The Department of Education shall provide ¹[such]¹
5 stenographic, clerical, and other administrative assistants, and
6 ¹[such]¹ professional staff as the task force requires to carry out its
7 work. The task force also shall be entitled to call to its assistance
8 and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State,
9 county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or
10 agency as it may require and as may be available for its purposes.

11
12 3. It shall be the duty of the task force to study, evaluate, and
13 make recommendations regarding school discipline policies and
14 practices in New Jersey ¹, including but not limited to, in-school
15 suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, use of physical
16 restraint, and use of seclusion techniques¹. The task force shall:

17 a. examine discipline practices of school districts in the State
18 and any racial disparities or disproportionate impacts associated
19 with the discipline practices, including the impact of race on the
20 suspension or expulsion of students enrolled in preschool programs;

21 b. evaluate the effectiveness of school discipline practices in
22 the State in reducing problem behaviors and protecting the safety
23 and security of students and school staff;

24 c. study federal guidance on school discipline issued by the
25 United States Department of Education and the United States
26 Department of Justice, including the January 8, 2014 Dear
27 Colleague Letter on the Nondiscriminatory Administration of
28 School Discipline and the January 2014 document entitled “Guiding
29 Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and
30 Discipline”;

31 d. study other best practices or emerging research regarding
32 improving school climate and creating positive and
33 nondiscriminatory school discipline practices;

34 e. provide recommendations to assist school districts in
35 improving school discipline policies and practices, including
36 ensuring that discipline practices are applied in an equitable and
37 nondiscriminatory manner; and

38 f. provide recommendations for legislation concerning school
39 discipline policies and practices.

40

41 4. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings and
42 recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant
43 to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than 12
44 months after the task force organizes.

45

46 5. This act shall take effect immediately, and the task force
47 shall expire 30 days after the issuance of its report.