ASSEMBLY, No. 5405

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman MAUREEN ROWAN
District 2 (Atlantic)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblyman Angelozzi

SYNOPSIS

Establishes "New Jersey Youth Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Act"; makes appropriation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/15/2026)

AN ACT drowning prevention and water safety, supplementing Title 26 of the Revised Statutes, and making an appropriation.

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

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New Jersey Youth Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Act."

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Drowning is a leading cause of accidental death for children ages one to four in the United States, and New Jersey's coastal, lake, and residential pool environment heightens this risk.

b. Research shows that formal swimming lessons can significantly reduce drowning risk in young children.

c. Many New Jersey families face financial barriers to swimming lessons, and not all parents receive consistent, evidence-based information on drowning prevention before or after the birth of a child.

d. A targeted voucher program paired with hospital-based education will increase access to swim lessons, empower caregivers, and save lives.

3. As used in this act:

"Department" means the New Jersey Department of Health.

"Eligible child" means a child who is at least 12 months of age and not older than seven years of age.

"Participating provider" means a swim instruction program or facility certified by the department or the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance that meets minimum safety and instructional standards.

"Voucher" means a redeemable certificate issued under this act for swimming lessons.

4. a. The Commissioner of Health, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education and the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance, shall establish and administer the New Jersey Swimming Lesson Voucher Program.

b. The program shall provide eligible children with vouchers redeemable for up to 10 group swim lessons at participating providers. Priority shall be given to families with household incomes at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, though all families with eligible children may apply on a first-come, first-served or lottery basis if funds are limited.

c. The department shall:

(1) develop and maintain a list of participating providers, including those offering lessons at reduced or no cost;

(2) promote the program through the department's website, birthing facilities, pediatricians, and local health departments;

(3) establish reimbursement rates to providers; and

(4) report annually to the Governor, and to the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) on program utilization, geographic distribution, and drowning prevention outcomes.

5. a. The Department of Health shall develop, in consultation with drowning prevention experts, standardized educational materials on:

(1) drowning risks and prevention strategies;

(2) the importance of swim lessons and water competency;

(3) safe bathing and supervision practices;

(4) CPR and emergency response; and

(5) information on how to access the swim lesson voucher program.

b. The department shall make the materials developed pursuant to this section available in multiple langauges to every licensed hospital, birthing center, and home birth provider in the State, which shall provide these materials to parents or legal guardian of every newborn child as part of postpartum education and discharge processes.

6. a. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health such sums as may be necessary to effectuate the purposes of this act.

b. The Department of Health shall apply for available federal funds and solicit private donations to effectuate the purposes of this act.

7. The Department of Health shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as are necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

8. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the "New Jersey Youth Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Act."

Under bill, the Commissioner of Health, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education and the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance, is to establish and administer the New Jersey Swimming Lesson Voucher Program (program). The program is to provide eligible children with vouchers redeemable for up to 10 group swim lessons at participating providers. Priority is to be given to families with household incomes at or below 300 percent of the federal

poverty level, though all families with eligible children may apply on a first-come, first-served or lottery basis if funds are limited.

The bill provides that the Department of Health (department) is to:

(1) develop and maintain a list of participating providers, including those offering lessons at reduced or no cost; (2) promote the program through the department's website, birthing facilities, pediatricians, and local health departments; (3) establish reimbursement rates to providers; and(4) report annually to the Governor, and to the Legislature on program utilization, geographic distribution, and drowning prevention outcomes.

Under the bill, the department of Health is to develop, in consultation with drowning prevention experts, standardized educational materials on: (1) drowning risks and prevention strategies; (2) the importance of swim lessons and water competency; (3) safe bathing and supervision practices; (4) CPR and emergency response; and (5) information on how to access the swim lesson voucher program.

The bill appropriates from the General Fund to the department such sums as may be necessary to effectuate the purposes of the bill.