

SENATE, No. 4814

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 15, 2026

Sponsored by:
Senator LATHAM TIVER
District 8 (Atlantic and Burlington)

SYNOPSIS

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

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT drowning prevention and water safety, supplementing Title
2 26 of the Revised Statutes, and making an appropriation.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey
8 Youth Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Act.”

9
10 2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

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

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

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

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

23
24 3. As used in this act:

25 “Department” means the New Jersey Department of Health.

26 “Eligible child” means a child who is at least 12 months of age
27 and not older than seven years of age.

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

31 “Voucher” means a redeemable certificate issued under this act
32 for swimming lessons.

33
34 4. a. The Commissioner of Health, in consultation with the
35 Commissioner of Education and the New Jersey YMCA State
36 Alliance, shall establish and administer the New Jersey Swimming
37 Lesson Voucher Program.

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

44 c. The department shall:

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

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

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

6
7 5. a. The Department of Health shall develop, in consultation
8 with drowning prevention experts, standardized educational
9 materials on:

10 (1) drowning risks and prevention strategies;
11 (2) the importance of swim lessons and water competency;
12 (3) safe bathing and supervision practices;
13 (4) CPR and emergency response; and
14 (5) information on how to access the swim lesson voucher
15 program.

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

22
23 6. a. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
24 Department of Health such sums as may be necessary to effectuate
25 the purposes of this act.

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

29
30 7. The Department of Health shall adopt rules and regulations
31 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410
32 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as are necessary to implement the provisions
33 of this act.

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35 8. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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