

# STATE OF NEW YORK

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1407--A

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 11, 2021

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Introduced by Sens. PARKER, HOYLMAN, JACKSON -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education -- recommitted to the Committee on Higher Education in accordance with Senate Rule 6, sec. 8 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to the establishment of the interagency task force on health literacy

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative intent. 1. It is the intent of the legislature  
2 to improve health care access and outcomes, and reduce unnecessary  
3 health care spending by addressing the issue of health literacy. Health  
4 literacy is the degree to which an individual, or individuals, have the  
5 capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health care information  
6 and services necessary for them to make appropriate health decisions.

7 2. A patient's health literacy may be affected if they have low educa-  
8 tion skills, cultural barriers to seeking health care, or limited  
9 English proficiency (LEP). Demographically, individuals with health  
10 literacy challenges often are represented disproportionately in the  
11 following groups: older adults, minority and/or immigrant populations,  
12 lower-income populations, and medically underserved populations.

13 3. Although New York has some existing health literacy initiatives,  
14 the legislature finds that a comprehensive statewide health literacy  
15 task force is a necessary and valuable step toward eliminating as much  
16 as practicable the negative outcomes that health literacy challenges  
17 create in the state.

18 § 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 238-b to  
19 read as follows:

20 § 238-b. Interagency task force on health literacy. 1. There is hereby  
21 established within the state university of New York, an interagency task

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 force on health literacy to be administered according to the provisions  
2 of this section. Such task force shall assist the health and human  
3 service agencies of this state in studying health literacy and develop-  
4 ing recommendations for improving health literacy in this state.

5 2. The SUNY Chancellor shall appoint a member of the SUNY school of  
6 public health faculty to chair the task force.

7 3. The following representatives shall be invited to serve on the task  
8 force:

9 (a) Three representatives from state hospitals to be selected by the  
10 temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly;

11 (b) The commissioner of the New York state department of health;

12 (c) The commissioner of the office of children and family services;

13 (d) A representative from the Medical Society of the state of New  
14 York;

15 (e) A representative from the New York Chapter, American Academy of  
16 Pediatrics;

17 (f) A representative from the New York Cooperative Extension;

18 (g) A representative from the Albany College of Pharmacy;

19 (h) A representative from the Long Island University A.M. Schwartz  
20 College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions;

21 (i) A representative from the State University of New York at Buffalo  
22 School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences;

23 (j) A representative from the New York State Occupational Health Clin-  
24 ic Network;

25 (k) A representative from the New York state office of minority  
26 health;

27 (l) A representative from the New York state developmental disabili-  
28 ties planning council;

29 (m) A representative from the health insurance industry;

30 (n) A representative from the Empire State Medical Association;

31 (o) The commissioner of the New York City department of health and  
32 mental hygiene;

33 (p) A representative from the New York City department for the aging;

34 (q) A representative from the Health Literacy Project partnership of  
35 the New York City mayor's office and United Way of New York City; and

36 (r) A representative from the New York state health foundation.

37 4. For the purposes of this section the following terms shall have the  
38 following meanings:

39 (a) "Chancellor" shall mean the chancellor of the SUNY schools of  
40 public health in Albany.

41 (b) "Health literacy" shall mean an individual's ability to read,  
42 understand, and act appropriately on health care information.

43 (c) "Task force" means the interagency task force on health literacy.

44 5. The task force shall be charged with studying and evaluating the  
45 health literacy of the residents of this state. The task force shall:

46 (a) Examine the ability of residents to access available health  
47 services and communicate with health care providers;

48 (b) Identify barriers that prevent residents with low health literacy  
49 from receiving health care;

50 (c) Identify groups at risk for low health literacy;

51 (d) Examine whether providing appropriate health information to and  
52 increasing the health literacy of the beneficiaries of public health  
53 services would increase the efficiency of health care providers and  
54 decrease expenditures;

55 (e) Examine the impact on health literacy of:

56 (i) Rising health care costs;

1 (ii) Increasingly complex health treatments;

2 (iii) An individual's age; and

3 (iv) Cultural and linguistic diversity.

4 6. The SUNY schools of public health in Albany shall provide the staff  
5 necessary to assist the task force in performing its duties.

6 7. No later than December fifteenth, two thousand twenty-three, the  
7 task force shall report to the legislature on its findings under subdi-  
8 vision five of this section. In addition, the report shall include a  
9 list of proposed rules and regulations and any necessary legislation.  
10 The task force shall also make recommendations to the legislature on  
11 strategies for:

12 (a) Improving the health literacy of the residents of this state.

13 (b) Promoting the use of plain language by health care providers.

14 (c) Simplifying the enrollment forms and procedures for accessing  
15 health insurance plans serving individuals in groups identified as at  
16 risk for low health literacy.

17 (d) Developing resources for health care providers and residents of  
18 this state to increase health literacy.

19 (e) Developing programs to aid the residents of this state in under-  
20 standing health care information.

21 (f) Developing educational curricula to increase health literacy.

22 (g) Developing easy-to-understand print and electronic information on  
23 health issues.

24 (h) Funding the recommendations of the task force.

25 § 3. This act shall take effect December 1, 2022.