

STATE OF NEW YORK

1407

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 11, 2021

Introduced by Sen. PARKER -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

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
22 force on health literacy to be administered according to the provisions
23 of this section. Such task force shall assist the health and human
24 service agencies of this state in studying health literacy and develop-
25 ing recommendations for improving health literacy in this state.

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 (d) A representative from the Medical Society of the state of New
10 York;

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 (k) A representative from the New York state office of minority
22 health;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 4. For the purposes of this section the following terms shall have the
34 following meanings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

47 (d) Examine whether providing appropriate health information to and
48 increasing the health literacy of the beneficiaries of public health
49 services would increase the efficiency of health care providers and
50 decrease expenditures;

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

52 (i) Rising health care costs;

53 (ii) Increasingly complex health treatments;

54 (iii) An individual's age; and

55 (iv) Cultural and linguistic diversity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 § 3. This act shall take effect December 1, 2021.