

# STATE OF NEW YORK

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5025--A

Cal. No. 502

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

February 22, 2021

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Introduced by Sens. SERRANO, HINCHEY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation -- reported favorably from said committee, ordered to first and second report, ordered to a third reading, amended and ordered reprinted, retaining its place in the order of third reading

AN ACT creating a legislative task force on outdoor environmental education and recreation that will benefit residents of New York state by stewardship and conservation of the environment, an appreciation of the importance of the wise use of natural resources as well as acknowledgment of the health benefits of time spent in nature

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

1 Section 1. Legislative findings. (a) The legislature hereby finds that  
2 in the last two decades, childhood has moved indoors. The average Ameri-  
3 can boy or girl spends just four to seven minutes each day in unstruc-  
4 tured outdoor play, and more than seven hours each day in front of an  
5 electronic screen. The decline in the appreciation and prevalence of  
6 outdoor recreation opportunities profoundly impacts the wellness of our  
7 state's youth. The correlation between increasing childhood obesity  
8 rates and the decline in outdoor recreation is undeniable.  
9 (b) The legislature further finds that visual and physical access to  
10 basic types of open space is vital for everyone, and particularly valu-  
11 able to children growing up in "urban hardscapes", or areas where access  
12 to nature is limited.  
13 (c) The legislature further finds that the development of policies  
14 that foster stewardship of the environment, the importance of the wise  
15 use of natural resources and recognition of the health benefits of time  
16 spent in nature are essential to the residents of New York state. The  
17 legislature concludes that this can best be accomplished by the creation  
18 of a task force on outdoor environmental education and recreation.

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

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1 § 2. Objectives. A legislative task force on outdoor environmental  
2 education and recreation is hereby established to:

3 (a) Promote the development of a framework that will ensure that New  
4 York state has an aggressive outdoor environmental education and recre-  
5 ation plan for children that focuses on creating, developing and retain-  
6 ing opportunities for outdoor play and learning;

7 (b) Identify and support programs which offer safe access to open  
8 spaces and summer camp to children from urban areas;

9 (c) Promote the development of policy recommendations to ensure that  
10 New York's public and private sectors focus on creating opportunities  
11 for underserved and at-risk children to participate in outdoor play and  
12 educational experiences;

13 (d) Promote the development of strategies to ensure that K-12 educa-  
14 tional institutions develop policies and programs that promote environ-  
15 mental education to encourage outdoor play thereby improving public  
16 health and take advantage of the physical, mental and spiritual benefits  
17 of moving outdoors in nature;

18 (e) Promote the development of strategies to assist community based,  
19 nonprofit organizations in furthering programs that provide for summer  
20 camp and out of school time opportunities for outdoor recreation or  
21 education;

22 (f) Evaluate laws, rules, and procedures to ensure that they facili-  
23 tate, or at least do not hinder, the growth of outdoor play or environ-  
24 mental education.

25 § 3. a. Composition. The task force shall consist of twelve members.  
26 The task force members will have experience and expertise in outdoor  
27 recreation and environmental education. The task force shall consist of:  
28 the commissioner of education or his or her designee, the commissioner  
29 of health or his or her designee, the commissioner of environmental  
30 conservation or his or her designee, the commissioner of the office of  
31 parks, recreation and historic preservation or his or her designee. One  
32 member shall be a representative from a nonprofit health and wellness  
33 organization. One member shall be a representative from a nonprofit  
34 environmental conservation organization. Two members shall be appointed  
35 by the governor; one member to be appointed by the temporary president  
36 of the senate; one member to be appointed by the minority leader of the  
37 senate; one member to be appointed by the speaker of the assembly; and  
38 one member to be appointed by the minority leader of the assembly. The  
39 task force shall be appointed for a term of two years.

40 b. The commissioner of the office of parks, recreation and historic  
41 preservation or his or her designee shall serve as chair of the task  
42 force.

43 c. The members of the task force shall receive no compensation for  
44 their services, but shall be allowed their actual and necessary expenses  
45 incurred in the performance of their duties pursuant to this act.

46 § 4. Report. The task force shall report its findings, conclusions and  
47 recommendations to the governor, majority leader of the senate and the  
48 speaker of the assembly by January 1, 2024. The task force may develop  
49 and publish other documents throughout the year as it deems necessary  
50 and/or appropriate.

51 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.