

# STATE OF NEW YORK

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5653

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

March 15, 2021

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Introduced by Sen. PARKER -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions

AN ACT in relation to establishing the commission on education in the twenty-first century; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof

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

1 Section 1. Commission established. (a) There is hereby created in the  
2 executive department a commission to be known as the "commission on  
3 education in the twenty-first century", hereafter referred to as the  
4 "commission", which shall be charged with examining the system of school  
5 districts and the delivery of education related services in New York  
6 state and recommending changes to that system in light of factors  
7 submitted pursuant to section four of this act and any additional  
8 factors established by the commission.

9 (b) The commission shall consist of eighteen statewide members, and  
10 regional members appointed pursuant to section six of this act. The  
11 eighteen statewide members shall be appointed as follows: (i) two  
12 members shall be appointed by the temporary president of the senate;  
13 (ii) two members shall be appointed by the speaker of the assembly;  
14 (iii) one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the  
15 senate; (iv) one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the  
16 assembly; (v) two members shall be appointed by the governor; and (vi)  
17 ten members shall be appointed by the board of regents. The board of  
18 regents shall designate the chair from among the statewide members of  
19 the commission.

20 (c) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for  
21 their services as members, but shall be allowed their actual and neces-  
22 sary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. Members of

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

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1 the commission shall be considered public officers for purposes of  
2 section 17 of the public officers law.

3 (d) The commission shall begin to act forty-five days after this act  
4 shall have become a law. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the  
5 members of the commission entitled to vote on the matter under consider-  
6 ation. Approval of any matter shall require the affirmative vote of a  
7 majority of the members voting thereon.

8 (e) The statewide members of the commission shall adopt by-laws for  
9 the management and regulation of its affairs.

10 § 2. Appointments to commission. The legislative leaders and the  
11 governor shall submit their appointments to the board of regents, and  
12 the board of regents shall make appointments, no later than forty-five  
13 days after this act becomes a law. If any such appointment is not made  
14 by such date, the person or board responsible for making the appointment  
15 pursuant to subdivision (b) of section one of this act may make the  
16 appointment after that date, but the vacant appointment shall not count  
17 for calculation of a quorum until it is filled. Vacancies in the commis-  
18 sion shall be filled in the same manner as the member whose vacancy is  
19 being filled was appointed.

20 § 3. Commission staff and agency liaison. (a) The commissioner of  
21 education shall designate such employees of the state education depart-  
22 ment as are reasonably necessary to provide support services to the  
23 commission. The commission, acting by the chair of the commission, may  
24 employ additional staff and consultants, who shall be paid from amounts  
25 available to the commission for that purpose.

26 (b) The commissioner of education shall appoint one or more represen-  
27 tatives of the department of education to serve as liaison between such  
28 department and the commission. All state agencies, public authorities  
29 and public benefit corporations shall provide such assistance as may be  
30 reasonably requested by the chair of the commission.

31 § 4. Factors and information for consideration. (a) The commissioner  
32 of education shall submit to the commission, no later than ninety days  
33 after this act becomes a law, a list of factors to be considered in its  
34 deliberations, which shall include but not be limited to: (i) geography,  
35 including physical proximity and the size of the current school  
36 districts and boards of cooperative educational services in each region  
37 of the state; (ii) demographics, including student enrollment trends and  
38 the composition and nature of communities in the current school  
39 districts and boards of cooperative educational services in each region  
40 of the state; (iii) economics, including existing collaborations to be  
41 preserved or enhanced and opportunities to deliver commodities and  
42 services through boards of cooperative educational services or other  
43 entities; (iv) transportation and the potential for regional transporta-  
44 tion services; (v) special education and the potential for regional  
45 special education services; (vi) population density; and (vii) other  
46 unique circumstances including the need to preserve existing or develop-  
47 ing relationships, meet the needs of students, maximize educational  
48 opportunities for students, assure local control, maintain the character  
49 of community schools and ensure equitable access to rigorous programs  
50 for all students.

51 (b) The commissioner of education may submit additional relevant  
52 factors to be considered in the deliberations of the commission. The  
53 commission may also adopt additional factors to be considered in its  
54 deliberations.

55 § 5. Deliberations of commission. The deliberations, meetings and  
56 other proceedings of the commission and any committee thereof shall be

1 governed by article 7 of the public officers law. Any one or more  
2 members of a committee may participate in a meeting of such committee by  
3 means of a conference telephone, conference video or similar communi-  
4 cations equipment allowing all persons participating in the meeting to  
5 hear each other at the same time. Participation by such means shall  
6 constitute presence in person at a meeting. At any meetings of the  
7 commission conducted by means of a conference telephone, conference  
8 video or similar communications equipment, other than executive  
9 sessions, the public shall be given an opportunity to listen. If a meet-  
10 ing other than an executive session is to be conducted by means of a  
11 conference telephone, conference video or similar communications equip-  
12 ment, the public notice for the meeting shall inform the public that  
13 such equipment will be used, and identify the means by which the public  
14 may listen to such meeting.

15 § 6. Regional input. (a) There shall be eight regional members of the  
16 commission for each region established pursuant to this section. For  
17 each region, two regional members shall be appointed by the governor,  
18 two regional members shall be appointed by the temporary president of  
19 the senate, two regional members shall be appointed by the speaker of  
20 the assembly, and two regional members shall be appointed by the board  
21 of regents. Regional members shall be considered to be members of the  
22 commission for purposes of this act, provided that:

23 (i) Regional members shall vote and be counted for quorum purposes  
24 only when the commission is acting on recommendations relating solely to  
25 the regional members' respective region; and

26 (ii) Regional members shall not be considered to be members of the  
27 commission for purposes of participation in commission meetings, except  
28 where items relating specifically to that member's region are on the  
29 agenda of a commission meeting.

30 (b) For purposes of this act, there shall be six regions:

31 (i) Long Island, consisting of the Eastern Suffolk, Nassau and Western  
32 Suffolk boards of cooperative educational services;

33 (ii) New York City;

34 (iii) Hudson Valley, consisting of the Dutchess, Orange-Ulster,  
35 Putnam-Northern Westchester, Rockland, Southern Westchester, Sullivan  
36 and Ulster boards of cooperative educational services;

37 (iv) Eastern, consisting of the Capital Region, Clinton-Essex-Warren-  
38 Washington, Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego, Franklin-Essex-Hamilton,  
39 Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery, Otsego-Delaware-Schoharie-Greene, Questar  
40 III, St. Lawrence-Lewis and Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex  
41 boards of cooperative educational services;

42 (v) Central, consisting of the Broome-Tioga, Cayuga-Onondaga, Jeffer-  
43 son-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida, Herkimer-Hamilton-Fulton-Oswego,  
44 Madison-Oneida, Oneida-Herkimer-Madison, Onondaga-Cortland-Madison,  
45 Oswego, Schuyler, Chemung, Tioga and Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga boards of  
46 cooperative educational services;

47 (vi) Western, consisting of the Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming,  
48 Erie 1, Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus, Genesee Valley, Monroe 1, Monroe  
49 2-Orleans, Ontario-Seneca-Yates-Cayuga-Wayne, Orleans-Niagara and Great-  
50 er Southern Tier boards of cooperative educational services.

51 (c) The commission shall establish a regional advisory committee for  
52 each region. The maximum number of members of each regional advisory  
53 committee shall be determined by the commission. Members of each  
54 regional advisory committee shall be appointed in equal numbers by the  
55 governor, the temporary president of the senate, the speaker of the  
56 assembly and the board of regents. The governor, the temporary president

1 of the senate, the speaker of the assembly, and the board of regents  
2 shall submit to the commission their appointments to the regional advisory  
3 committees no later than ninety days after this act shall have  
4 become a law. If any such appointment is not made by such date, the  
5 person or board responsible for making such appointment may make the  
6 appointment after that date, but the vacant appointment shall not count  
7 for calculation of a quorum until such position is filled. Vacancies in  
8 regional advisory committees shall be filled in the same manner as the  
9 member whose vacancy is being filled was appointed. The regional advisory  
10 committees shall begin to act ninety days after this act shall have  
11 become a law.

12 (d) Each regional advisory committee upon consideration of demographic,  
13 geographic, educational and fiscal indicators within each board of  
14 cooperative educational services region, shall develop recommendations  
15 for reconfiguring such region's school districts and administrative  
16 functions to align educational services with regional and local needs.  
17 In carrying out its functions, a regional advisory committee shall  
18 foster discussions among, and conduct formal public hearings with requisite  
19 public notice to solicit input from, local stakeholders' interests,  
20 including but not limited to, school district administrators, district  
21 superintendents and superintendents of schools, teachers, school board  
22 members, parents, students, non-pedagogical school support personnel,  
23 representatives from post-secondary institutions and other pertinent  
24 groups and individuals. In developing its recommendations, each regional  
25 advisory committee shall as far as practicable estimate the efficiencies  
26 that may be derived from such school district or administrative reconfiguration.  
27 On November 15, 2023, each regional advisory committee shall  
28 transmit to the commission a report containing its recommendations,  
29 which shall include specific recommendations for school district and  
30 administrative reconfigurations. Such recommendations shall include but  
31 not be limited to: delivery of commodities and services; pupil transportation;  
32 specialized professional development; maintenance; insurance procurement;  
33 payroll administration; human resources and employee benefit coordination;  
34 cooperative purchasing coordination; centralization of business operations;  
35 printing services; state aid planning; textbook purchasing and substitute  
36 teacher coordination; safety and risk management; the units of school administration  
37 to be included in the reconfigured school district; the units of school administration  
38 that will be transferred to the board of cooperative educational services; size,  
39 composition and apportionment of the governing body; the composition,  
40 powers and duties of any local school committees to be created; the  
41 disposition of real and personal school property; the disposition of  
42 existing school indebtedness and lease-purchase; the assignment of  
43 school personnel contracts, school collective bargaining agreements and  
44 other school contractual obligations; the disposition of existing school  
45 funds and existing financial obligations, including undesignated fund  
46 balances, trust funds, reserve funds and other funds appropriated for  
47 school purposes; a transition plan that addresses the development of a  
48 budget for the first school year and interim personnel policies; an  
49 estimate of the cost savings to be achieved through reconfiguration and  
50 how costs will be reduced; recommended dates by which such actions  
51 should occur; necessary investments, if any, that should be made in each  
52 case to carry out the regional advisory committee's recommendations; and  
53 the regional advisory committee's justification for its recommendations,  
54 including the use of any factors developed pursuant to section four of  
55 this act.

1 (e) The failure of any regional advisory committee to perform the  
2 duties imposed by this section shall not affect the obligation of the  
3 commission to perform the duties imposed by section seven of this act.

4 § 7. Commission recommendations. (a) The commission, upon consider-  
5 ation of demographic, geographic, educational and fiscal indicators  
6 within each board of cooperative educational services region, shall  
7 develop recommendations for reconfiguring school districts and adminis-  
8 trative functions to align educational services with regional and local  
9 needs. In carrying out its functions, the commission shall collaborate  
10 with the regional advisory committees insofar as practicable to foster  
11 discussions among, and conduct formal public hearings with requisite  
12 public notice to solicit input and recommendations from statewide and  
13 regional stakeholder interests including but not limited to school  
14 district administrators, district superintendents and superintendents of  
15 schools, teachers, school board members, parents, students, non-pedagog-  
16 ical school support personnel, representatives from post-secondary  
17 institutions and other pertinent groups and individuals. The commission  
18 shall formally solicit recommendations from school district administra-  
19 tors, district superintendents and superintendents of schools, teachers,  
20 school board members, parents, students, non-pedagogical school support  
21 personnel, representatives from post-secondary institutions and other  
22 interested parties in each region of the state, and it shall take into  
23 account such recommendations and the recommendations of the regional  
24 advisory committees during its deliberations. In developing its recom-  
25 mendations, the commission shall as far as practicable estimate the  
26 efficiencies that may be derived from such school district and adminis-  
27 trative reconfiguration, and shall consider the recommendations of the  
28 regional advisory committees.

29 (b) The commission shall make recommendations relating to school  
30 district and administrative reconfiguration, within each region. The  
31 regional commission members shall vote as members of the commission only  
32 when the commission is acting on recommendations relating solely to the  
33 regional commission members' region.

34 (c) Such recommendations shall include but not be limited to: delivery  
35 of commodities and services; pupil transportation; specialized profes-  
36 sional development; maintenance; insurance procurement; payroll adminis-  
37 tration; human resources and employee benefit coordination; cooperative  
38 purchasing coordination; centralization of business operations; printing  
39 services; state aid planning; textbook purchasing and substitute teacher  
40 coordination; safety and risk management; the units of school adminis-  
41 tration to be included in the reconfigured school district; the units of  
42 school administration that will be transferred to the board of cooper-  
43 ative educational services; size, composition and apportionment of the  
44 governing body; the composition, powers and duties of any local school  
45 committees to be created; the disposition of real and personal school  
46 property; the disposition of existing school indebtedness and lease-pur-  
47 chase; the assignment of school personnel contracts, school collective  
48 bargaining agreements and other school contractual obligations; the  
49 disposition of existing school funds and existing financial obligations,  
50 including undesignated fund balances, trust funds, reserve funds and  
51 other funds appropriated for school purposes; a transition plan that  
52 addresses the development of a budget for the first school year and  
53 interim personnel policies; an estimate of the cost savings to be  
54 achieved through reconfiguration and how costs will be reduced; recom-  
55 mended dates by which such actions should occur; necessary investments,  
56 if any, that should be made in each case to carry out the commission's

1 recommendations; the commission's response to the recommendations of the  
2 regional advisory committees; and the commissioner's justification for  
3 its recommendations, including the use of the factors pursuant to  
4 section four of this act.

5 (d) On or before December 1, 2023, the commission shall transmit to  
6 the governor and the legislature a report containing its recommenda-  
7 tions, which shall include specific recommendations for school districts  
8 to be reconfigured and specific recommendations for administrative  
9 services to be transferred to boards of cooperative educational  
10 services. Upon the transmission of the report to the governor and the  
11 legislature the commission shall be dissolved.

12 § 8. Implementation of recommendations. (a) Notwithstanding any  
13 contrary provision of law, rule or regulation related to the reconfigur-  
14 ing of school districts and administrative services the commissioner of  
15 education shall take all actions necessary to implement, in a reason-  
16 able, cost-efficient manner, the recommendations of the commission  
17 pursuant to subdivisions (b) and (c) of section seven of this act. Such  
18 school districts and boards of cooperative educational services shall  
19 submit to the commissioner of education, at a time and in a form as  
20 determined by the commissioner of education, an acceptable plan of  
21 reconfiguration in accordance with applicable regulations.

22 (b) The provisions of subdivision (a) of this section shall not apply:  
23 (i) unless the governor has transmitted the commission's report under  
24 section seven of this act with his or her written approval of the recom-  
25 mendations of the commission pursuant to subdivisions (b) and (c) of  
26 section seven of this act to the commissioner of education and transmit-  
27 ted a message to the legislature stating his or her approval of the  
28 report on or before December 5, 2023; and (ii) if a majority of the  
29 members of each house of the legislature vote to adopt a concurrent  
30 resolution rejecting the recommendations of the commission pursuant to  
31 subdivisions (b) and (c) of section seven of this act in their entirety  
32 by December 31, 2023, after receiving a message from the governor under  
33 this subdivision. In no event shall the commissioner of education begin  
34 to implement the recommendations of the commission pursuant to subdivi-  
35 sions (b) and (c) of section seven of this act prior to December 31,  
36 2023.

37 § 9. The commission shall be authorized and entitled to receive any  
38 grants offered pursuant to section 54 of the state finance law.

39 § 10. Severability clause. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivi-  
40 sion, section or part of this act shall be adjudged by any court of  
41 competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect,  
42 impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in  
43 its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section  
44 or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judg-  
45 ment shall have been rendered. It is hereby declared to be the intent of  
46 the legislature that this act would have been enacted even if such  
47 invalid provisions had not been included herein.

48 § 11. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire and be  
49 deemed repealed June 30, 2025.