§ 702-a. Settlement of labor disputes. 1. Upon its own motion, in an existing, imminent or threatened labor dispute, the board may and, upon the direction of the governor, the board shall take such steps as it may deem expedient to effect a voluntary, amicable and expeditious adjustment and settlement of the differences and issues between employer and employees which have precipitated or culminated in or threatened to precipitate or culminate in such labor dispute. In providing its services, the board shall take into consideration and make all parties aware of the availability of other mediation services, such as the federal mediation and conciliation service, and shall make every effort to give priority to those parties which do not have access to such other services. To this end, it shall be the duty of the board: (a) to arrange for, hold, adjourn, or reconvene a conference or conferences between the disputants and/or one or more of their representatives; (b) to invite the disputants and/or their representative to attend such conferences and submit, either orally or in writing, the grievances of and differences between the disputants; (c) to discuss such grievances and differences with the disputants and their representatives and in the course of such proceeding, upon the consent of all disputants and their representatives, to appoint fact-finding boards and to arbitrate such grievances and differences; and (d) to assist in negotiating and drafting agreements for the adjustment in settlement of such grievances and differences and for the termination or avoidance, as the case may be, of the existing or threatened labor dispute.

2. The board shall have the power at the request of the parties to a collective bargaining agreement between an employer and its employees to arbitrate such grievances and differences as may arise thereunder and to establish panels of qualified persons to be available to serve as arbitrators of such grievances and differences. The board shall promulgate regulations setting forth eligibility requirements for inclusion on such panels, in order to ensure the availability of qualified, accessible, affordable arbitrators.

3. In carrying out any of its work under this article, the board may designate one of its members or an officer or employee of the board to act in its behalf and may delegate to such designee one or more of its

duties hereunder and, for such purpose, such designee shall have all of the powers hereby conferred upon the board in connection with the discharge of the duty or duties so delegated.

4. No member or officer of the board having any financial or other interest in a trade, business, industry or occupation in which a labor dispute exists or is threatened and of which the board has taken cognizance, shall be qualified to participate in any way in the acts or efforts of the board in connection with the settlement or avoidance thereof.

5. Members of the board and all other employees of the board, including any arbitrator serving on an arbitration panel established by the board, shall not be compelled to disclose to any administrative or judicial tribunal any information relating to, or acquired in, the course of their official activities under this article, nor shall any reports, minutes, written communications, or other documents of the board pertaining to such information be subject to subpoena; except that where the information so required indicates that the person appearing or who has appeared before the board has been the victim or subject of a crime, said members of the board, the executive secretary and all other employees of the board, including any arbitrator serving on an arbitration panel established by the board, may be required to testify fully in relation thereto upon any examination, trial, or other proceeding in which the commission of a crime is the subject of inquiry.