

SENATE, No. 2617

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 222nd LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2026 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Senator ANGELA V. MCKNIGHT

District 31 (Hudson)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Diegnan, Stack, Timberlake, Singleton, Cryan and Wimberly

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Council for Community Recovery and Family Success; appropriates \$4.0 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT establishing the Council for Community Recovery and
2 Family Success, supplementing Title 9 of the Revised Statutes,
3 and making an appropriation.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

7
8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. As a State, our child and family services and the resources
10 appropriated to fund those services are primarily designed to
11 respond to crisis-related events. Consequently, the services
12 provided to children and their families struggle to produce long-
13 term positive results.

14 b. A growing body of literature suggests that comprehensive,
15 integrated, and sustained investments in family support, prevention,
16 early intervention, and infant, child, youth, and family well-being
17 are more cost-effective than a fragmented approach of various
18 programs providing services that only address the symptoms that
19 cause family crises and distress.

20 c. The solution to improving outcomes for all children and
21 families in New Jersey is to provide an interdisciplinary approach to
22 family support and preventive services and to enact a Bill of Rights
23 for Infants, Children, Youth, and Families in New Jersey. A Bill of
24 Rights, which would be based on the United Nations Treaty on the
25 Rights of the Child, would recognize and protect the rights of
26 infants, children, youth, and families in New Jersey and provide a
27 framework for the provision of preventive services to at-risk
28 infants, children, and youth and their families.

29 d. It is therefore in the best interests of the State to invest in
30 and implement programs, which promote prevention, early
31 intervention, and the well-being of infants, children, youth, and
32 families in order to improve the outcomes for all infants, children,
33 youth, and families who reside in New Jersey.
34

35 2. a. There is established the Council for Community
36 Recovery and Family Success in, but not of, the Department of
37 Community Affairs. For the purpose of complying with the
38 provisions of Article V, Section IV, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey
39 Constitution, the Council for Community Recovery and Family
40 Success is allocated within the Department of Community Affairs
41 but, notwithstanding this allocation, the council shall be
42 independent of any supervision or control by the department or by
43 any officer or employee thereof.

44 b. The council shall consist of 25 members as follows:

45 (1) the Commissioners of Children and Families, Community
46 Affairs, Corrections, Education, Health, Human Services, and Labor
47 and Workforce Development, and the Executive Director of the

1 Juvenile Justice Commission in the Department of Law and Public
2 Safety, or their designees, who shall serve ex officio;

3 (2) 13 public members appointed by the Governor, which
4 members shall include representatives of children's advocacy and
5 family support, juvenile justice advocacy, behavioral health,
6 housing support and homelessness prevention, and early childhood
7 supports and education organizations, an organization providing
8 support for family financial security, business and commerce, the
9 faith-based community, a community leader, and parents or
10 guardians whose children are receiving State funded services;

11 (3) two public members appointed by the Senate President, one
12 of whom shall be a representative of municipal government, and
13 one of whom shall be a resident of an underserved community; and

14 (4) two public members appointed by the Speaker of the General
15 Assembly, one of whom shall be a representative of county
16 government, and one of whom shall be a resident of an underserved
17 community.

18 c. Vacancies in the membership of the council shall be filled in
19 the same manner provided for the original appointments. The
20 members of the council shall serve without compensation, but may
21 be reimbursed for travel and other miscellaneous expenses
22 necessary to perform their duties, within the limits of funds made
23 available to the council for these purposes.

24 d. The council shall organize as soon as practicable but no later
25 than 60 days following the appointment of its members, and shall
26 select two co-chairpersons from among their members, one of
27 whom shall be a State official and one of whom shall be a
28 community representative. The chairpersons shall appoint a
29 secretary who need not be a member of the council.

30 e. The council shall meet at the call of its chairpersons, and
31 hold hearings at the times and in the places it deems appropriate and
32 necessary to fulfill its charge. The council shall be entitled to call
33 to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of
34 any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau,
35 commission, or public or private agency as the council may require
36 and as may be available for the council's purposes, and shall be
37 entitled to call on the assistance of professional services for support,
38 and the Administrative Office of the Courts for information relevant
39 to its purposes.

40 f. The council may seek the advice of experts, such as persons
41 specializing in the field of social work, education, law, human
42 services, economic development, workforce development, or other
43 related fields, as deemed appropriate by the membership of the
44 council.

45 g. The council shall annually prepare its administrative budget
46 and work plan in conformance with its duties, and shall secure staff
47 services from the Departments of Children and Families,
48 Community Affairs, Corrections, Education, Health, Human

1 Services, and Labor and Workforce Development, the Juvenile
2 Justice Commission, other council member organizations, and from
3 other contracted professional staffing and support services, as may
4 be necessary for the council to carry out its duties under this act.

5
6 3. a. The purpose of the council shall be to guide and oversee
7 the development and implementation of a Statewide initiative
8 focusing on the social and economic well-being of infants, children,
9 youth, and families, and the provision of holistic, age and
10 developmentally appropriate services that support a child's
11 development from birth to young adulthood. The initiative shall be
12 based on the four pillars of family success:

- 13 (1) positive family relationships and community connections;
- 14 (2) safety and financial security;
- 15 (3) high quality education and quality learning environments;
- 16 and
- 17 (4) good health and infant, child, youth, and family well-being.

18 b. (1) In order to implement the Statewide initiative, the
19 council shall:

20 (a) advocate for a State Bill of Rights for Infants, Children,
21 Youth, and Families to provide a framework for the initiative's
22 implementation;

23 (b) identify policies, procedures, practices, and financial
24 priorities relating to preventive services for at-risk infants, children,
25 youth, and families and the gaps in those policies, procedures,
26 practices, and financial priorities, and develop strategies to promote
27 the well-being of infants, children, youth, and families and
28 encourage family success;

29 (c) review the programs, policies, and initiatives of the
30 Departments of Children and Families, Community Affairs,
31 Corrections, Education, Health, Human Services, Labor and
32 Workforce Development, and Law and Public Safety, and any other
33 departments of State government and any community-based
34 organizations as may be appropriate, and make recommendations
35 that will enable such departments and organizations to better
36 coordinate and improve the effectiveness of the department's or
37 organization's programs, policies, and initiatives;

38 (d) conduct ongoing, comprehensive cost-benefit analyses of the
39 budgets of State departments and community-based organizations
40 that provide services to at-risk infants, children, youth, and families,
41 and State and local funding mechanisms for infant, child, youth, and
42 family service systems, to identify and make recommendations on
43 how to redirect resources and programmatic focus from distress
44 services to preventive services for at-risk infants, children, youth,
45 and families and for family success initiatives;

46 (e) explore strategies to maximize and effectively utilize all
47 State, county, municipal, and federal funding sources, as well as
48 any funds from business and philanthropic investments as may be

1 available, for the purpose of providing supportive and preventive
2 services for infants, children, youth, and families and to improve
3 family success outcomes; and
4 (f) establish community recovery and family success councils,
5 which shall include members of existing councils, boards, and task
6 forces where indicated, in each county of the State, which councils
7 shall:
8 (i) assess local infant, child, and youth demographics, including
9 age, gender, race, socio-economic status, and ethnicity, as well as
10 indicators of well-being;
11 (ii) collect and analyze information concerning the services and
12 resources that are currently available, the cost and availability of
13 services and programs, and the met and unmet needs of infants,
14 children, youth, and families in the county; and
15 (iii) develop methods that support innovative preventive services
16 for at-risk infants, children, youth, and families and the
17 development of local family success initiatives.
18 (2) The goals of the Statewide initiative shall be to:
19 (a) promote positive family relationships, community
20 connections, and preventive services to ensure the financial
21 security, quality education, good health, safety, permanency, and
22 well-being of infants, children, youth, and families through an
23 integrated service planning and delivery system of care;
24 (b) develop and recommend the adoption of community-
25 informed family success outcomes, including specified
26 performance-based outcomes measures and objectives;
27 (c) identify obstacles that impede or prevent family success and
28 develop strategies to successfully overcome such obstacles;
29 (d) explore the role of institutional racism and bias in the
30 delivery of services to at-risk infants, children, youth, and families,
31 and how racism and bias can impede or prevent family success;
32 (e) identify policies and practices that promote the delivery of
33 preventive services to at-risk infants, children, youth, and families
34 and encourage family success; and
35 (f) incorporate input from key stakeholders, including parents,
36 family members, community members, and children receiving
37 preventive services from the Department of Children and Families
38 and the Department of Human Services, and any other department
39 of State government or from a community-based organization, on
40 the development of a plan to design, strengthen, and implement
41 local family success initiatives.
42 c. Subject to the availability of funds, the council shall
43 implement the Statewide initiative pursuant to this section over the
44 course of the next three fiscal years. The council shall establish
45 criteria for the allocation of funds made available to the council,
46 assigning priority based on both the total child population and
47 percentage of child poverty in each eligible jurisdiction. The initial

1 findings of local family success councils shall be based on an
2 assessment of need and county readiness.

3 d. All departments and agencies of the State and all
4 community-based organizations that provide relevant distress or
5 preventive services, maintain relevant data sets, or perform
6 functions pertinent to relevant distress or prevention programs, shall
7 assist the council in its responsibilities pursuant to subsection b. of
8 this section.

9 e. As used in this section:

10 “Distress services” mean initiatives intended to remediate
11 circumstances, including but not limited to, educational, social, and
12 personal failures, and family crises, that endanger the safety,
13 permanency, health, and well-being of infants, children, and youth.

14 “Preventative services” means initiatives that promote the safety,
15 permanency, health, and well-being of infants, children, youth, and
16 their families and divert the need for distress services.

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18 4. The council shall submit an annual report to the Governor
19 and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the
20 Legislature, with the council’s recommendations for legislative and
21 administrative actions regarding the use of federal, State, county,
22 municipal, and business and philanthropic funds to support the
23 development and implementation of innovative family success
24 initiatives and preventive services for all infants, children, youth,
25 and families in New Jersey.

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27 5. The Council for Community Recovery and Family Success
28 shall adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,”
29 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations
30 necessary to effectuate the purposes of this act.

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32 6. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Council
33 for Community Recovery and Family Success the sum of
34 \$4,000,000 to implement the provisions of this act. Unexpended
35 amounts appropriated to the council pursuant to this section shall
36 not be returned to the General Fund at the end of the fiscal year, and
37 shall be retained by the council in the succeeding fiscal year for the
38 purposes of implementing the provisions of this act. The council
39 shall be authorized to invest unexpended funds appropriated
40 pursuant to this section, and to use dividends and interest earned on
41 the amount invested for the purposes of implementing the
42 provisions of this act.

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44 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

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This bill establishes the Council for Community Recovery and Family Success in, but not of, the Department of Community Affairs, which will develop strategies to promote the well-being of infants, children, youth, and families, and encourage family success.

The council will consist of 25 members, including the Commissioners of Children and Families, Community Affairs, Corrections, Education, Health, Human Services, and Labor and Workforce Development, and the Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission in the Department of Law and Public Safety, or their designees, who will serve ex officio, and 17 public members, who will be representatives of certain entities that provide services to children and families, or have certain experience with receiving family services in New Jersey.

The council will manage the development and implementation of a Statewide initiative concerning the social and economic well-being of infants, children, youth, and families, and the provision of holistic, age and developmentally appropriate services that support a child's development from birth to young adulthood.

- In order to implement the Statewide initiative, the council will:
- (1) advocate for a State Bill of Rights for Infants, Children, Youth, and Families, which will provide a framework for the initiative;
 - (2) identify and develop policies, strategies, and financial priorities that promote family success;
 - (3) recommend policies to improve the efficacy of existing State and community-based services and programs;
 - (4) explore strategies to leverage public and private funding to provide preventive services; and
 - (5) establish community recovery and family success councils in each county.

The goal of the Statewide initiative will be to: promote positive family relationships, community connections, and preventive services to ensure financial security, quality education, health, safety, and permanency for infants, children, youth, and families through an integrated service planning and delivery system.

The bill defines "distress services" to mean services to remediate circumstances that endanger the safety, permanency, health, and well-being of infants, children, and youth; and "preventative services" as those services that promote the safety, permanency, health, and well-being of the target populations and divert the need for distress services.

The council will submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature that will include recommendations for legislative and administrative actions on the use of public and private resources to

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1 support family success initiatives and preventive services for all
2 families.

3 The bill appropriates \$4.0 million from the General Fund to the
4 council to implement the provisions of the bill, and provides that
5 the council may use any unexpended appropriations in the
6 succeeding fiscal year.