

CHAPTER 446

AN ACT creating the Youth Employment and After School Incentive Pilot Program, supplementing Title 34 of the Revised Statutes .

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

C.34:15F-12 Youth Employment and After School Incentive Pilot Program.

1. a. There is established in the Department of Labor a Youth Employment and After School Incentive Pilot Program which shall be administered by the Commissioner of Labor, pursuant to the provisions of this act. The program shall provide for employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth with private and nonprofit employers. The purpose of the program shall be to enable disadvantaged youth to acquire job knowledge and skills and an understanding of the linkage between the skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary to function as an adult in the workplace.

As used in this act, "disadvantaged youth" means public and nonpublic school students as well as youth who are not students who reside in municipalities where both the rates of unemployment and violent crime significantly exceed the Statewide rates of unemployment and violent crime by percentages which shall be designated by the commissioner. The term shall include youth in these municipalities who are participating in a program of aftercare following their release from juvenile detention or community facilities.

b. There is established in, but not of, the Department of Labor the Disadvantaged Youth Employment Opportunities Council. The council shall consist of 15 members: the Commissioner of Labor, the Commissioner of Education, the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, the Secretary of State and the Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission, or their designees, who shall serve *ex officio* and as nonvoting members; and 10 public members appointed by the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly. The Governor shall appoint two religious leaders and two representatives of education organizations. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the Assembly shall each appoint a leader of the business community, a labor leader, and a person representing organizations that have expertise serving the needs of disadvantaged youth. The public members shall serve for terms of three years, may be reappointed and may serve until a successor has been appointed. Of the public members first appointed, five shall be appointed for terms of three years, and five shall be appointed for terms of two years. A vacancy in the membership, occurring other than by expiration of a term, shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, but for the unexpired term only. The members shall serve without compensation, but the council may, within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to it, reimburse members for actual expenses necessarily incurred in the discharge of their official duties.

The council shall organize as soon as its members are appointed and shall select a chairman and vice-chairman from among its members and may select a secretary, who need not be a member of the council. The council shall meet monthly, and at such other times as may be necessary.

The council may employ, prescribe the duties and fix and pay the compensation of such persons it may deem necessary to carry out the duties of the council within the limits of available appropriations.

It shall be the duty of the council to:

- (1) Develop a master plan to increase employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth;
- (2) Enlist the commitment of the State's business leadership to provide employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth;
- (3) Enlist the support of the State's key unions which operate apprenticeship and similar programs;
- (4) Develop proposals for innovative efforts to assist economically disadvantaged youth to enroll in and successfully complete employment programs;
- (5) Involve all sectors of the community, including high level representatives of business, youth-serving agencies, foundations, local school systems, the communications media, and the religious community in an effort to promote and coordinate employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth; and
- (6) In conjunction with the Department of Labor and the Commerce and Economic Growth

Commission, seek to identify and maximize any available federal funding for the purpose of enhancing employment opportunities provided under this act.

The council shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of such employees of any State, county or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available to it for these purposes.

The Commissioner of Labor, in consultation with the council, may promulgate rules and regulations necessary to effectuate the purposes of this act.

C.34:15F-13 Development, administration of program.

2. a. In cooperation with the Disadvantaged Youth Employment Opportunities Council established in section 1 of this act, the Commissioner of Labor shall develop and administer the employment program established under this act. The commissioner shall, to the greatest extent feasible, attempt to achieve a balance of enrolled disadvantaged youth from the northern, central, and southern parts of the State.

b. The Commissioner of Labor, in consultation with the Department of Education, the Juvenile Justice Commission, and the council shall develop procedures relating to the program referral process; establish the selection criteria for participants which shall include the identification of local disadvantaged youths assessed by local law enforcement and juvenile corrections authorities as being at risk of gang membership or involvement or reinvolvement in the criminal justice system and students who are not meeting minimal district standards of behavior and academic achievement; provide a listing of employers who have agreed to participate in the program; and establish the process which will be utilized for matching disadvantaged youth to employment opportunities that will enhance the self-esteem and assimilation of life skills necessary for productive functioning in the school setting and society.

C.34:15F-14 Maximum hours of employment for youths.

3. a. The State's limitations on hours of employment for child labor shall govern the maximum hours of employment for youths employed through the program. For participation in the employment program, the youth shall receive from the employer compensation of not less than the minimum wage rate pursuant to section 5 of P.L.1966, c.133 (C.34:11-56a4).

b. The Commissioner of Labor, in conjunction with the council, shall endeavor to work with the Secretary of State, the Commissioner of Education, major Statewide education organizations, and nonprofit organizations providing specialized services to youth to publicize the opportunities available under the program and promote the voluntary participation therein of school districts and students.

C.34:15F-15 Plan to collect data on effectiveness of program.

4. a. The Commissioner of Labor shall implement a plan to collect data on the effectiveness of the program in meeting the needs and conditions of disadvantaged youths which place them at risk of academic or social failure or both. The plan shall include a system to track participants to determine if they successfully completed the school year and whether such students and other youth participants succeed in making productive contributions to their communities.

b. Within two years following the effective date of this act, the Commissioners of Labor and Education, in concert with the council established in section 1 of this act, shall submit to the Governor and the Legislature an evaluation of the Youth Employment and After School Incentive Pilot Program and recommendations to the Legislature that will enable them to better coordinate and improve the effectiveness of their efforts.

C.34:15F-16 Eligibility for tax credit allotments.

5. Employers participating in the employment program established under this act shall be eligible for the tax credit allotments authorized under the provisions of P.L. , c. (C.) (now pending before the Legislature as Assembly Bill No.1918 of 2000).

7. This act shall take effect on the first day of the sixth month after enactment.

Approved January 11, 2002.