

## CHAPTER 117

AN ACT establishing the New Jersey Aphasia Study Commission.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Aphasia is a disorder of the brain that occurs, most commonly, after a stroke or traumatic brain injury and affects a person's ability to communicate. A person with aphasia typically has difficulty speaking and, sometimes, difficulty with reading, writing, and understanding what other people are saying; however, the condition does not affect a person's intellect;

b. Although the condition is most common among older people, aphasia can be acquired by people of all ages following severe head and brain trauma;

c. The type and severity of language dysfunction depends on the precise location and extent of damaged brain tissue. Generally, there are four types of aphasia: (1) expressive aphasia involves difficulty in conveying thoughts through speech or writing; (2) receptive aphasia involves difficulty understanding spoken or written language; (3) anomia or amnesia aphasia, the least severe form of aphasia, involves difficulty in using the correct names for particular objects, people, places or events; and (4) global aphasia, the most severe form of aphasia, involves loss of almost all language function, both comprehensive and expression;

d. There is no one treatment proven to be effective for all types of aphasia. Persons with aphasia usually experience improvement over time, aided by speech therapy, rehabilitation services, and counseling; however, many persons with aphasia are prone to depression, hopelessness, and isolation, avoiding contact with others in order to pass on social situations that may lead to mutual frustration;

e. It is estimated that one million people in the United States have aphasia, more than the number of people suffering from Parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, or cerebral palsy; and

f. It is, therefore, in the public interest for the State to establish a commission to study the prevalence and impact of aphasia on residents of the State, and to review model support programs for persons with aphasia and their families.

2. a. There is established the New Jersey Aphasia Study Commission in the Department of Health and Senior Services.

The purpose of the commission shall be to:

(1) establish a mechanism in order to ascertain the prevalence of aphasia in New Jersey, and the unmet needs of persons with aphasia and those of their families;

(2) study model aphasia support programs, such as, the Kean University Institute for Adults Living with Communication Disabilities and the Adler Aphasia Center; and

(3) provide recommendations for additional support programs and resources to meet the unmet needs of persons with aphasia and their families.

b. The commission shall consist of 11 members as follows:

(1) the Commissioners of Health and Senior Services, Banking and Insurance, and Human Services, or their designees, who shall serve *ex officio*; and

(2) eight public members who shall be appointed as follows: two persons appointed by the Senate President, one of whom is a person with aphasia and one of whom provides services to persons with aphasia; two persons appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, one of whom is a person with aphasia and one of whom provides services to persons with aphasia; and four persons appointed by the Governor, one of whom is a person

with aphasia, one of whom provides services to persons with aphasia, and two of whom are members of the public with demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the commission.

Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled in the same manner provided for the original appointments.

c. The commission shall organize within 120 days following the appointment of a majority of its members and shall select a chairperson and vice-chairperson from among the members. The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the commission.

d. The public members shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties and within the limits of funds available to the commission.

e. The commission shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the 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 its purposes.

f. The commission may meet and hold hearings as it deems appropriate.

g. The Department of Health and Senior Services shall provide staff support to the commission.

3. The commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), along with any legislative bills that it desires to recommend for adoption by the Legislature, no later than 12 months after the initial meeting of the commission.

4. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon the issuance of the commission report.

Approved January 5, 2011.