

CHAPTER 428

AN ACT establishing the Task Force on Maximizing Employment for People with Disabilities.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. National studies consistently demonstrate that individuals with disabilities want to work, but their participation in the labor force is astoundingly low; and
 - b. In 2015, only 38 percent of working-age individuals with disabilities were employed in New Jersey, compared to a 77 percent labor participation rate for the general population; and
 - c. Over 1.1 million of New Jersey's 9.0 million residents have a disability; and
 - d. With more than half of the population with disabilities being individuals in the working ages of 18-64, it is estimated that there are over 578,000 New Jersey residents with disabilities who are of working age, with more than 376,000 of them living in the community and unemployed; and
 - e. Because tens of thousands of people with disabilities have demonstrated the capacity to do competitive work when given the opportunity, their desire for the dignity of a job and a paycheck must not be ignored; and
 - f. It is therefore appropriate to establish a task force to study the problem of unemployment and underemployment among New Jersey citizens with disabilities, review existing programs in this and other states, and issue a report with recommendations to increase opportunities, expand employment readiness and training programs, and increase employment supports for those individuals.

2. a. There is established, in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Task Force on Maximizing Employment for People with Disabilities. The task force shall consist of 14 members, including one representative each for the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Education, New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, the State Rehabilitation Council, the Office of the Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and their Families, and the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, who shall serve *ex officio*, and eight members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate as follows: a member representing ACCSES NJ; a member representing the New Jersey Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association; a member representing the business community; a member representing the New Jersey Food Council; a member representing The Arc of New Jersey; a representative of a community rehabilitation program; and two individuals who have a disability. The appointments shall expire upon the submission of a report to the Governor and Legislature pursuant to subsection c. of this section.
 - b. The purpose of the task force is to study the problem of unemployment and underemployment among individuals with disabilities, review relevant, available programs within the State of New Jersey, as well as in other states, and issue a report which offers a vision and provides viable recommendations on how the State can increase opportunities, expand employment readiness and training programs, and offer greater employment supports, for individuals with disabilities.
 - c. The task force shall issue the report to the Governor and Legislature not later than one year after the members of the commission are appointed, and make the report available to the public by means including the posting of the report on the web sites of the State agencies represented on the task force.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 21, 2020.