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ENROLLED SEPTEMBER 10, 2021

PASSED IN SENATE SEPTEMBER 07, 2021

PASSED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 08, 2021

AMENDED IN SENATE SEPTEMBER 01, 2021

AMENDED IN SENATE JULY 06, 2021

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 01, 2021

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 22, 2021

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 18, 2021

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2021–2022 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL**NO. 1207****Introduced by Assembly Members Akilah Weber and Luz Rivas****February 19, 2021**

An act to add and repeal Part 8 (commencing with Section 122500) of Division 105 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to public health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1207, Akilah Weber. Pathways Through Pandemics Task Force.

Existing law establishes the California Health and Human Services Agency, under the direction of the Secretary of California Health and Human Services, which includes, among other departments, the State Department of Public Health and the State Department of Health Care Services. Existing law establishes various programs for the prevention and control of communicable diseases, including programs that provide for the testing for, notifications of exposure to, and tracking by the state of, communicable diseases.

This bill would establish, in the California Health and Human Services Agency, the Pathways Through Pandemics Task Force to study lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop strategies to navigate future pandemics. The bill would require the task force to convene various entities to engage in discussions on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, develop and recommend best practices for an equitable response to future pandemics, and determine the impact of state laws on coordinating the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as specified. The bill would require the task force to report its findings to the Legislature, as specified, on or before December 1, 2024, and would repeal these provisions as of January 1, 2025.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) California is one of the most populous states in the nation.
- (b) California has the fifth largest economy in the world, and the largest economy in the United States, boasting a \$3.2 trillion gross state product as of 2019.
- (c) Direct travel-related spending in California totaled \$144.9 billion in 2019, a 3.2 percent increase from the previous year.
- (d) The gross domestic product (GDP) of the California travel industry was \$84.6 billion in 2019, which represents about 2.5 percent of the total GDP of the state.
- (e) In the past, California had a strategic stockpile of medical supplies for responding to epidemics.
- (f) In 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger ordered the creation of an epidemic-ready medical equipment stockpile, including three 200-bed mobile hospitals with 50 million N95 respirators, 2,400 ventilators, and 21,000 additional patient beds.
- (g) Governor Jerry Brown cut the budget for warehousing and keeping up the reserve in 2011, as a response to the Great Recession economic downturn.
- (h) The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had recommended that people do not use face masks, making the announcement on the same day that the first case of person-to-person transmission of coronavirus was reported in the United States.
- (i) The first deaths related to the COVID-19 virus in California occurred in December 2019.
- (j) California has experienced significantly high rates of COVID-19 infections, despite efforts to limit the spread of the virus, while the federal government actively sought to undermine the efforts to obtain ventilators from federal stockpiles in states that were controlled by Democrats.
- (k) California has issued stay at home orders and closed certain indoor activities to slow the spread of the virus.
- (l) Nearly 4 million workers filed for unemployment in California in January and February of 2021.
- (m) Small businesses have been forced to close.
- (n) Due to California's sheer size and population and inadequate planning and policies, the Employment Development Department has failed to adequately provide timely financial assistance to employees who have paid into their unemployment benefits.
- (o) California's public transportation system is operating at significant budget shortfalls due to a lack of ridership.
- (p) Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, with Latinos and African Americans dying at higher rates as compared to their White counterparts.
- (q) Medical experts have stated that COVID-19 will not be the final disease to potentially wreak havoc on our society.

SEC. 2. Part 8 (commencing with Section 122500) is added to Division 105 of the Health and Safety Code, to read:

PART 8. Pathways Through Pandemics Task Force

122500. (a) There is hereby established, in the California Health and Human Services Agency, the Pathways Through Pandemics Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to study lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and develop strategies to navigate future pandemics.

(b) The task force shall do all of the following:

(1) Convene state departments, agencies, local governments, private sector entities, nonprofit entities, and others the task force deems appropriate, to engage in discussions on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussions shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following issues:

(A) The state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(B) The disproportionate rates of COVID-19 infection and death among Latinos, Native Americans, African Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and non-English speakers.

(C) The distribution, administration, and availability of COVID-19 testing sites.

(D) The distribution, administration, and availability of vaccines.

(E) The misinformation that is causing hesitation among ethnic minorities to become vaccinated.

(2) Develop and recommend best practices for an equitable response to future pandemics, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(A) Equitable distribution, administration, and availability of disease testing.

(B) Equitable distribution, administration, and availability of vaccines or other medical treatment to combat the disease.

(C) Equitable distribution and availability of personal protective equipment.

(D) Robust education outreach efforts to ethnic minorities to ensure an understanding of the disease and how best to combat it.

(E) Access to safety net programs.

(3) Determine the impact of state laws on coordinating the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(c) The task force shall report the findings made pursuant to subdivision (b) to the Legislature, including to the committees with jurisdiction over public health matters, such as the Senate Committee on Health and the Assembly Committee on Health, on or before December 1, 2024. The report shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

122501. (a) The chairperson of the task force shall be the Secretary of California Health and Human Services.

(b) In addition to the chairperson, the task force shall be comprised of nine members, appointed as follows:

(1) A representative from the Office of Health Equity.

(2) A representative from the County Health Executives Association of California.

(3) A representative from the California Conference of Local Health Officers.

(4) A representative from an urban county in northern California, appointed by the chairperson.

(5) A representative from an urban county in southern California, appointed by the chairperson.

(6) A representative from a rural county, appointed by the chairperson.

(7) The Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Senate President pro Tempore shall each appoint one representative from an ethnic minority who has previous experience with health equity.

(c) Members of the task force shall be entitled to a one-hundred-dollar (\$100) per diem and reimbursement for travel expenses.

122502. (a) For the purposes of implementing this part, the task force may do both of the following:

(1) Hold hearings and sit and act at any time and location in the state.

(2) Request the attendance and testimony of witnesses.

(b) The task force may establish a subcommittee, as it deems necessary to fulfill its functions. A subcommittee or member of the task force may, if authorized by the task force, take any action that the task force may take pursuant to this section.

(c) The task force may acquire, directly from the head of a state agency, available information that the task force considers useful in the discharge of its duties. All state agencies shall cooperate with the task force with respect to that information and shall furnish all information requested, to the extent permitted by law. The task force shall keep confidential any information received from a state agency that is confidential or exempt from the California Public Records Act.

122503. (a) The task force may appoint and fix the compensation of personnel the task force deems necessary for the implementation of this part.

(b) The task force may procure supplies, services, and property by contract in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

(c) The task force may enter into contracts with state departments and agencies, federal departments and agencies, and private entities for the purpose of conducting research or surveys, preparing reports, and performing other activities necessary for the discharge of the duties of the task force.

122504. This part shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2025, and as of that date is repealed.