
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2325 Session of
1996

INTRODUCED BY BROWN, HUTCHINSON, LYNCH, FAIRCHILD, TIGUE,
ARGALL, CLYMER, ARMSTRONG, GRUPPO, BAKER, CIVERA, SATHER,
PETTIT, JADLOWIEC, CLARK, FARGO, COWELL, LEH, SAYLOR,
D. W. SNYDER, DENT, S. H. SMITH, SHEEHAN, STERN, ADOLPH,
J. TAYLOR, MANDERINO, BATTISTO, GEIST AND KENNEY,
JANUARY 31, 1996

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JANUARY 31, 1996

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Distance Learning Task Force to formulate State
2 distance learning policy; and conferring powers and duties on
3 the task force and the Department of Education.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Distance
8 Learning Task Force Act.

9 Section 2. Definitions.

10 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
11 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
12 context clearly indicates otherwise:

13 "Department." The Department of Education of the
14 Commonwealth.

15 "Distance learning." Instruction which utilizes various
16 forms of telecommunications or other advanced computer

1 technology to enable instructors to communicate with students at
2 one or more geographically separate locations by means of one-
3 way or two-way video, audio or data transmissions.

4 "Interactive telecommunications." The dissemination or
5 carriage of information or programs using audio, video,
6 graphics, data or any combination thereof to allow persons at
7 geographically separate locations to communicate and share
8 information.

9 "School entity." A school district, intermediate unit or
10 area vocational-technical school.

11 "Secretary." The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.

12 "Technology." Any technical or scientific method of sending,
13 receiving, storing, packaging or assimilating audio, video,
14 graphics, data or any combination thereof by means of
15 electromagnetic signal and any equipment, processes and
16 facilities used for that purpose.

17 Section 3. Establishment of the task force.

18 The secretary shall establish a Statewide task force on
19 interactive telecommunications, technology and distance learning
20 within the department. The task force shall be representative of
21 the various educational program providers and users of this
22 technology, as well as public and private entities that provide
23 these services.

24 Section 4. Powers and duties of the task force.

25 The purpose of the task force shall be to:

26 (1) Make recommendations to encourage coordination of
27 State and regional agencies in providing leadership for
28 interactive telecommunications, technology and distance
29 learning.

30 (2) Examine various delivery systems used to expand

1 course offerings to students.

2 (3) Make recommendations concerning staff development.

3 (4) Make recommendations to promote the availability of
4 distance learning to unserved regions through an equitable
5 access process.

6 (5) Make recommendations to encourage and expand the
7 coordination of interactive telecommunications and technology
8 between school entities, postsecondary institutions and
9 libraries.

10 (6) Make recommendations to encourage interaction
11 between public and private telecommunications providers and
12 users.

13 (7) Identify various interactive telecommunications and
14 technologies that meet the needs of school entities.

15 (8) Make recommendations to facilitate awareness of
16 distance learning programs.

17 (9) Make recommendations to enhance the implementation
18 of the act of July 2, 1993 (P.L.248, No.45), known as the
19 Educational Resource Sharing Through Distance Learning Act.

20 (10) Make recommendations for the use of distance
21 learning grants authorized under section 2597 of the act of
22 March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School
23 Code of 1949.

24 Section 5. Membership and meetings.

25 (a) Composition.--The membership of the task force shall be
26 designated by the secretary. The secretary or his designee shall
27 serve as chairman. The membership shall include, but not be
28 limited to, the following:

29 (1) Representatives of school entities, including
30 representatives of rural and urban school entities.

1 (2) Representatives of local communities and Statewide
2 organizations.

3 (3) Representatives of postsecondary institutions and
4 continuing education programs.

5 (4) Representatives of the telecommunications industry.

6 (5) A representative from the Governor's Office.

7 (6) Four members from the General Assembly.

8 (b) Establishment.--The task force shall be established by
9 February 1, 1996, and shall issue a report by November 1, 1996.

10 The report shall be made to the Governor and issued to the
11 General Assembly.

12 (c) Meetings.--The task force shall meet as needed to
13 fulfill the purposes provided in section 4. The members shall
14 receive no payment for their services. Members who are not
15 employees of a school entity or State government shall be
16 reimbursed for expenses incurred in the course of their official
17 duties.

18 Section 6. Department.

19 The Department of Education and other appropriate
20 administrative agencies under the jurisdiction of the Governor
21 shall provide technical assistance and staffing for the task
22 force.

23 Section 7. Effective date.

24 This act shall take effect immediately.