

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 606 Session of 2011

INTRODUCED BY WAGNER, BISHOP, B. BOYLE, CALTAGIRONE, D. COSTA, P. COSTA, DEASY, DeLUCA, DERMODY, FRANKEL, FREEMAN, GERGELY, GOODMAN, JOHNSON, JOSEPHS, KORTZ, MAHER, MAHONEY, MATZIE, MUNDY, MURT, M. O'BRIEN, PASHINSKI, PAYTON, READSHAW, SANTARSIERO, STURLA, WATERS, WHEATLEY AND YOUNGBLOOD, FEBRUARY 10, 2011

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 10, 2011

AN ACT

1 Establishing a task force within the Department of Education;  
2 and providing for its powers and duties and for  
3 administrative support.

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

6 Section 1. Task force on homeless children's education.

7 (a) Establishment.--There is established within the  
8 Department of Education a task force on homeless children's  
9 education.

10 (b) Composition.--The task force shall be composed of the  
11 following members:

12 (1) The Secretary of Education, who shall act as  
13 chairperson of the task force.

14 (2) The Secretary of Public Welfare or a designee.

15 (3) The Secretary of Health or a designee.

16 (4) The chair of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

1 or a designee.

2 (5) Fifteen members to be appointed by the Secretary of  
3 Education within 30 days of the effective date of this act,  
4 to include:

5 (i) Five representatives of local agencies assisting  
6 homeless children and families, one each from  
7 southwestern, northwestern, central, southeastern and  
8 northeastern Pennsylvania.

9 (ii) Four representatives of Commonwealth school  
10 districts representing urban, suburban and rural areas of  
11 Pennsylvania.

12 (iii) Three representatives from Pennsylvania  
13 intermediate units.

14 (iv) Three representatives from Pennsylvania social  
15 services organizations with experience working with  
16 homeless children and education issues.

17 (c) Objectives.--The overall goal of the task force is to  
18 examine the educational needs and status of homeless children in  
19 this Commonwealth in order to develop and recommend a Statewide  
20 proposal to provide a strong educational foundation for homeless  
21 children.

22 (d) Statewide study.--The task force shall examine and  
23 assess the landscape of the homeless-child population on a  
24 Statewide level, including the demographics and barriers to  
25 educational success. The study shall include:

26 (1) A demographic survey of homeless parents and  
27 homeless youth that includes, but is not limited to:

28 (i) length of homelessness;

29 (ii) number of episodes of homelessness;

30 (iii) highest educational level attained;

(iv) living situation of homeless students;  
(v) ages and grade levels of homeless students;  
(vi) school attendance rates and gaps in enrollment;  
(vii) average number of school changes;  
(viii) access to remedial services;  
(ix) access to and use of Title I funds to support  
homeless students;  
(x) drop-out rates of homeless students;  
(xi) standardized test scores; and  
(xii) causes and signs of homelessness.

(2) The successes and limitations in helping homeless children receive a quality education from the perspective of teachers, school districts, parents, students, shelter staff and others involved in providing services to homeless children.

(3) Assessment of what is working to serve homeless children during and after school, including summer.

(4) Knowledge by parents, students and others of educational rights of students.

(5) Assessment of the relationship between homeless shelters and school personnel and effective protocols that ensure school success for homeless students.

(6) Benchmarks of other states for best practices.

(7) Assessment of methods for identifying and counting homeless students across this Commonwealth and effective data collection systems.

(e) Report to the General Assembly.--The task force shall issue a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the President pro tempore of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of

Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the chairman and minority chairman of the Education Committee of the Senate and the chairman and minority chairman of the Education Committee of the House of Representatives. This report shall be submitted within one year after the first meeting of the task force and distributed to those State and local agencies that work with homeless children, as well as to all Pennsylvania school districts.

(f) Meetings.--The task force shall meet at least once each quarter and shall hold its first meeting within 60 days of the effective date of this act.

(g) Compensation.--Task force members shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for all necessary travel and other reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the performance of their duties as members.

(h) Duties of department.--The Department of Education shall provide administrative support, office space and any other technical assistance required by the task force to carry out its duties under this section, including access to all reports and data required by the Federal Government to comply with Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10, 20 U.S.C. § 6301, et seq.) and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1986 (Public Law 100-77, 42 U.S.C. § 11301, et seq.).

Section 2. Effective date.

This act shall take effect in 60 days.