



# House of Representatives

## File No. 621

General Assembly

January Session, 2021

**(Reprint of File No. 146)**

House Bill No. 5614  
As Amended by House Amendment  
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner  
April 28, 2021

### **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION ON THE DISPARATE IMPACT OF COVID-19.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) (a) As used in this section,  
2 "COVID-19" means the respiratory disease designated by the World  
3 Health Organization on February 11, 2020, as coronavirus 2019, and any  
4 related mutation thereof recognized by the World Health Organization  
5 as a communicable respiratory disease.

6 (b) There is established a Commission on the Disparate Impact of  
7 COVID-19, which shall be part of the Legislative Department. The  
8 commission shall expire on June 20, 2023, or upon a two-thirds vote of  
9 the membership of the commission, whichever is earlier.

10 (c) The commission, established in subsection (b) of this section, shall  
11 consist of the following members:

12 (1) Four appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives,

13 who have expertise in evaluating disparities in education, housing and  
14 human services;

15 (2) Four appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, who  
16 have expertise in evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on essential  
17 workers;

18 (3) Three appointed by the majority leader of the House of  
19 Representatives, two of whom have expertise in public health and  
20 infectious diseases and one of whom shall be a teacher;

21 (4) Three appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, two of  
22 whom have expertise in small business and one of whom shall be a  
23 housing advocate;

24 (5) Three appointed by the minority leader of the House of  
25 Representatives, two of whom have expertise in nursing homes and one  
26 of whom shall be a representative of higher education;

27 (6) Three appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, two of  
28 whom have expertise in health care delivery and one of whom has  
29 expertise in the hospitality industry;

30 (7) A representative of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus of the  
31 General Assembly, who shall be appointed by the chairperson of said  
32 caucus; and

33 (8) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children,  
34 Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or the executive director's designee,  
35 who shall be a nonvoting, ex-officio member.

36 (d) Any member of the commission appointed under subsection (c)  
37 of this section may be a member of the General Assembly.

38 (e) All initial appointments to the commission shall be made not later  
39 than September 1, 2021.

40 (f) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro

41 tempore of the Senate shall select the chairperson of the commission  
42 from among the members of the commission. Such chairperson shall  
43 schedule the first meeting of the commission, which shall be held not  
44 later than September 1, 2021.

45 (g) The administrative staff of the Commission on Women, Children,  
46 Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall serve as administrative staff of  
47 the commission.

48 (h) Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority.

49 (i) A majority of the commission shall constitute a quorum for the  
50 transaction of any business.

51 (j) The members of the commission shall serve without  
52 compensation, but shall, within available funds, be reimbursed for  
53 expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties.

54 (k) The commission shall have the following powers and duties: (1)  
55 To analyze any disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on  
56 different racial, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic groups in the state;  
57 (2) to identify the causes for such disparate impact; (3) to assess the  
58 effects of federal and state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic on such  
59 disparate impact; (4) to appoint and convene at least two working  
60 groups to analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, one to focus  
61 on the impact on education, housing and human services needs and  
62 another to focus on the impact on labor, commerce and public health  
63 needs; (5) to hold one or more public hearings as necessary to carry out  
64 the purposes of this section; (6) to request from any executive  
65 department, board, commission or other agency of the state such  
66 assistance and data as necessary, reasonable and available to carry out  
67 the purposes of this section; (7) to accept any gift, donation or bequest  
68 for the purpose of performing the duties described in this section; (8) to  
69 establish bylaws to govern its procedures; and (9) to perform such other  
70 acts as may be necessary and appropriate to carry out the duties  
71 described in this subsection.

72 (l) The commission shall meet as often as deemed necessary by the  
73 chairperson.

74 (m) Not later than January 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the  
75 commission shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of  
76 section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the Governor, the speaker of the  
77 House of Representatives, the president pro tempore of the Senate, the  
78 majority leader of the House of Representatives, the majority leader of  
79 the Senate, the minority leader of the House of Representatives, the  
80 minority leader of the Senate and the chairperson of the Black and  
81 Puerto Rican Caucus of the General Assembly on (1) the results of the  
82 commission's analysis pursuant to subsection (k) of this section, and (2)  
83 recommendations for policy changes and amendments to the general  
84 statutes necessary to address the causes for any disparate impact of the  
85 COVID-19 pandemic and to improve outcomes during any future  
86 pandemic.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2021	New section

*The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.*

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### **OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:** None

**Municipal Impact:** None

### **Explanation**

The bill establishes a twenty-two-member Commission on the Disparate Impact of COVID-19, which shall be part of the legislative department. The members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but shall, within available funds, be reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties. This is expected to be minimal.

The commission shall expire on June 20, 2023, or upon a two-thirds vote of the membership of the commission, whichever is earlier.

Not later than January 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the commission shall submit a report outlining recommendations for policy changes and amendments to the general statutes necessary to address the causes for any disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve outcomes during any future pandemic.

House "A" altered the membership of the commission and created an expiration date.

### **The Out Years**

**State Impact:** None

**Municipal Impact:** None

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**OLR Bill Analysis****HB 5614 (as amended by House "A")\******AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION ON THE DISPARATE IMPACT OF COVID-19.*****SUMMARY**

This bill establishes a 22-member Commission on the Disparate Impact of COVID-19 within the legislative department. The commission must, among other things, analyze and identify the cause of any disparate impact of COVID-19 and the federal and state responses to it on different racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups.

The bill establishes qualifications for commission members and requires the commission to hold its first meeting by September 1, 2021. The commission's powers and duties include, among other things, convening at least two working groups and holding any necessary public hearings. The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity's (CWCSEO) administrative staff serve as the commission's administrative staff.

Starting by January 1, 2022, the commission must annually report its findings and legislative and policy recommendations to the commission's appointing authorities and the governor. The commission expires on June 20, 2023, or after a two-thirds vote by its membership, whichever is earlier.

\*House Amendment "A" (1) changes the bill's effective date from upon passage to July 1, 2021; (2) terminates the commission within a specified time period and correspondingly removes provisions on the length of members' terms; (3) eliminates the governor's appointments to the commission; (4) adds gender as a component of the commission's disparate impact analysis and requires the commission to assess the

effects of the federal response on any COVID-19-related disparate impact; and (5) makes minor and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

### **COMMISSION POWERS AND DUTIES**

Under the bill, the commission's powers and duties include:

1. analyzing any disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the state's different racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups and identifying its causes;
2. assessing the effects of the federal and state responses on any such disparate impact;
3. appointing and convening at least two working groups to analyze the impact of COVID-19, one each on (a) education, housing, and human services needs and (b) labor, commerce, and public health needs;
4. holding any necessary public hearings;
5. requesting any necessary and reasonable assistance and data available from executive departments, boards, commissions, or other state agencies;
6. accepting gifts, donations, or bequests to perform its duties;
7. establishing bylaws; and
8. performing any other necessary and appropriate acts to carry out its duties.

### **COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP**

The bill establishes the commission with 21 appointed members plus the CWCSEO executive director, or his designee, who serves as an ex-officio nonvoting member. Appointed members may be legislators.

Table 1 shows the appointing authority and required qualifications

for the commission's 21 voting members.

**Table 1: Appointed Members**

<b>Appointing Authority</b>	<b>Number of Appointments</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
House speaker	Four	Must have expertise in evaluating disparities in education, housing, and human services
Senate president pro tempore	Four	Must have expertise in evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on essential workers
House majority leader	Three	Two must have expertise in public health and infectious diseases; one must be a teacher
Senate majority leader	Three	Two must have expertise in small business; one must be a housing advocate
House minority leader	Three	Two must have expertise in nursing homes; one must be a representative of higher education
Senate minority leader	Three	Two must have expertise in health care delivery; one must have expertise in the hospitality industry
Chairperson of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus	One	Representative of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus

The bill requires appointing authorities to make their appointments by September 1, 2021, and fill any vacancies. Commission members are not paid but must be reimbursed for necessary expenses within available funds.

### **COMMISSION MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES**

The bill requires the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore to select the chairperson from among the commission's members. The chairperson must schedule the commission's first meeting, which must be held by September 1, 2021. After that, the commission must meet upon the call of the chairperson.

Under the bill, a majority of the members constitutes a quorum to transact business.

**COMMISSION REPORTS**

The bill requires the commission to annually report starting by January 1, 2022, to all commission appointing authorities and the governor on (1) the results of the commission’s analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic’s disparate impact on the state’s racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups and (2) policy and legislative recommendations to address the causes of any disparate impact and improve outcomes during any future pandemic.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Commerce Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 19 Nay 4 (03/11/2021)