
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

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number of Appointments</i>	<i>Qualifications</i>
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)