



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

Committee Bill No. 705

LCO No. 5699



Referred to Committee on APPROPRIATIONS

Introduced by:
(APP)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF PANDEMIC AND PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) (a) There is established an
2 Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness, which shall be
3 within the Department of Public Health for administrative purposes
4 only. The department head of said office shall be the executive director
5 of the Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness, who shall be
6 appointed by the Governor in accordance with the provisions of sections
7 4-5 to 4-8, inclusive, of the general statutes, as amended by this act, with
8 the powers and duties therein prescribed.

9 (b) The Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness shall be
10 responsible for the following:

11 (1) Preparing the state against pandemics, epidemics and other public
12 health emergencies, as defined in section 19a-131 of the general statutes;

13 (2) Developing the state's public health emergency plan and
14 initiatives in coordination with the Commissioner of Public Health;

15 (3) (A) Establishing and maintaining an inventory of a strategic
16 reserve of necessary equipment in the event of a pandemic, epidemic or
17 other public health emergency, including, but not limited to, hand
18 sanitizer, ventilators, hospital beds, modes of transportation, gloves,
19 masks, gowns and other personal protective equipment and equipment
20 and space for vaccine storage; (B) testing and inspecting the items in
21 such strategic reserve on a quarterly basis to ensure that such items have
22 not expired and remain in working order; and (C) establishing a
23 protocol for access to such strategic reserve;

24 (4) Connecting small businesses to local providers of personal
25 protective equipment; and

26 (5) Developing and proposing policies to (A) support and secure the
27 state's medical supply chain, (B) restore jobs at the conclusion of any
28 pandemic, epidemic or other public health emergency, and (C) establish
29 and support training programs to increase the availability of necessary
30 staff during a pandemic, epidemic or other public health emergency.

31 (c) In performing the duties set forth in this section, the Office of
32 Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness may request the assistance
33 of the staffs and resources of the Department of Public Health, the
34 Department of Administrative Services, the Department of Education,
35 the Labor Department, the Department of Economic and Community
36 Development, the Department of Emergency Services and Public
37 Protection, the Department of Social Services and all other state
38 departments, agencies and commissions as necessary. The office may
39 also request the assistance of local health directors and may utilize any
40 other public or private agencies, groups or individuals who are
41 appropriate and who may be available to assist in performing such
42 duties.

43 (d) Not later than January first, annually, the executive director of the
44 Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness shall submit a
45 report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general
46 statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly

47 having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets
48 of state agencies and public health, the Committee on Pandemic and
49 Public Health Preparedness, established pursuant to section 2 of this act,
50 and the Public Health Preparedness Advisory Committee, established
51 pursuant to section 19a-131g of the general statutes, as amended by this
52 act. Such report shall include a summary of the office's activities during
53 the previous year and an inventory and assessment of the strategic
54 reserve established pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

55 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) (a) There is established a
56 Committee on Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness to review and
57 advise on the state's planning for and response to pandemics, epidemics
58 and other public health emergencies, as defined in section 19a-131 of the
59 general statutes.

60 (b) The committee shall consist of the following members: (1) The
61 Governor, or the Governor's designee; (2) the speaker of the House of
62 Representatives, or the speaker's designee; (3) the president pro tempore
63 of the Senate, or the president's designee; (4) the majority leader of the
64 House of Representatives, or the majority leader's designee; (5) the
65 majority leader of the Senate, or the majority leader's designee; (6) the
66 minority leader of the House of Representatives, or the minority leader's
67 designee; (7) the minority leader of the Senate, or the minority leader's
68 designee; and (8) the chairpersons and ranking members of the joint
69 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
70 matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies and
71 public health, or their designees.

72 (c) The members of the committee shall select the chairperson of the
73 committee from among the members of the committee. Such
74 chairperson shall schedule the first meeting of the committee, which
75 shall be held not later than thirty days after the effective date of this
76 section. The committee shall meet on a quarterly basis, except the
77 committee shall meet on a biweekly basis during any period in which a
78 public health emergency is declared pursuant to section 19a-131a of the

79 general statutes.

80 (d) The council shall have the following powers and duties:

81 (1) To review the policies and practices of the Office of Pandemic and
82 Public Health Preparedness and advise the office on such policies and
83 practices;

84 (2) To develop and recommend policies for improving the state's
85 preparedness for and response to pandemics, epidemics and other
86 public health emergencies;

87 (3) To review all spending by state agencies in response to a
88 pandemic, epidemic or other public health emergency;

89 (4) To obtain from any executive department, board, commission or
90 other agency of the state such assistance and data, including, but not
91 limited to, financial data and contingency plans for pandemics,
92 epidemics and other public health emergencies, as necessary and
93 available to carry out the purposes of this section; and

94 (5) To perform such other acts as may be necessary and appropriate
95 to carry out the duties described in this section.

96 (e) The administrative staff of the joint standing committees of the
97 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public
98 health and appropriations and the budgets of state agencies shall serve
99 as administrative staff of the task force.

100 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) The Connecticut Agricultural
101 Experiment Station shall, in accordance with the provisions of chapter
102 426 of the general statutes, track potential and active animal pandemics
103 and epidemics in the state and assess the risk of transmission from any
104 such pandemic or epidemic to humans. If said station identifies an
105 animal pandemic or epidemic and determines that such animal
106 pandemic or epidemic poses a risk of transmission to humans, said
107 station shall immediately notify the Office of Pandemic and Public

108 Health Preparedness and the Committee on Pandemic and Public
109 Health Preparedness.

110 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2022,
111 the Department of Education shall submit a report, in accordance with
112 the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
113 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
114 matters relating to education. Such report shall include a plan to address
115 staff shortages in schools that may occur as a result of a pandemic or
116 epidemic, which shall include, but need not be limited to, a proposal for
117 school districts to share available teachers on a limited time basis.

118 Sec. 5. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Office of Pandemic and Public
119 Health Preparedness shall develop a proposal for a comprehensive
120 program to support essential workers in the health care, transportation
121 and food service industries both during and following a pandemic,
122 epidemic or other public health emergency, as defined in section 19a-
123 131 of the general statutes. The office shall assess the feasibility and
124 necessity of including the following elements in such program: (1)
125 Support for apprenticeship training programs; (2) assistance in
126 accessing the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program; (3) tuition
127 support for the training of such essential workers; (4) student loan debt
128 assistance; (5) assistance in accessing the state's unemployment system
129 for individuals who lack Internet or computer access; (6) in collaboration
130 with the Department of Agriculture, local and regional boards of
131 education and farmers in the state, the provision of food resources for
132 those in need, including, but not limited to, the establishment of
133 greenhouses in areas that have limited access to affordable and
134 nutritious food; (7) rental, mortgage, heating, utility and Internet access
135 assistance; and (8) a direct access telephone line for individuals who are
136 landlords to ensure that rent and mortgage resources are directed to
137 such landlords.

138 (b) Not later than January 1, 2022, the Office of Pandemic and Public
139 Health Preparedness shall submit a report, in accordance with the

140 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing
141 committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
142 relating to public health and appropriations and the budgets of state
143 agencies. Such report shall include (1) legislative recommendations to
144 implement such program, and (2) a plan to provide funding for such
145 program.

146 Sec. 6. Section 19a-131g of the general statutes is repealed and the
147 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

148 The Commissioner of Public Health and the executive director of the
149 Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness shall establish a
150 Public Health Preparedness Advisory Committee for purposes of
151 advising the Department of Public Health and the Office of Pandemic
152 and Public Health Preparedness on matters concerning emergency
153 responses to a public health emergency. The advisory committee shall
154 consist of the Commissioner of Public Health, the executive director of
155 the Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness, the
156 Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, the
157 president pro tempore of the Senate, the speaker of the House of
158 Representatives, the majority and minority leaders of both houses of the
159 General Assembly and the chairpersons and ranking members of the
160 joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance
161 of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies,
162 public health, public safety and the judiciary, and representatives of
163 town, city, borough and district directors of health, as appointed by the
164 commissioner, and any other organization or persons that the
165 commissioner deems relevant to the issues of public health
166 preparedness. [Upon the request of the commissioner, the] The Public
167 Health Preparedness Advisory Committee [may] shall meet on a
168 quarterly basis and when otherwise requested by the commissioner to
169 review the plan for emergency responses to a public health emergency
170 and other matters as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

171 Sec. 7. Section 4-5 of the general statutes is repealed and the following

172 is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

173 As used in sections 4-6, 4-7 and 4-8, the term "department head"
174 means Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, Commissioner
175 of Administrative Services, Commissioner of Revenue Services,
176 Banking Commissioner, Commissioner of Children and Families,
177 Commissioner of Consumer Protection, Commissioner of Correction,
178 Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, State Board
179 of Education, Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public
180 Protection, Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection,
181 Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Public Health,
182 Insurance Commissioner, Labor Commissioner, Commissioner of
183 Mental Health and Addiction Services, Commissioner of Social Services,
184 Commissioner of Developmental Services, Commissioner of Motor
185 Vehicles, Commissioner of Transportation, Commissioner of Veterans
186 Affairs, Commissioner of Housing, Commissioner of Aging and
187 Disability Services, the Commissioner of Early Childhood, the executive
188 director of the Office of Military Affairs, the executive director of the
189 Office of Health Strategy, the executive director of the Office of
190 Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness and the executive director of
191 the Technical Education and Career System. As used in sections 4-6 and
192 4-7, "department head" also means the Commissioner of Education.

193 Sec. 8. Section 4-5 of the general statutes, as amended by section 6 of
194 public act 17-237, section 279 of public act 17-2 of the June special
195 session, section 20 of public act 18-182 and section 283 of public act 19-
196 117, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
197 *July 1, 2022*):

198 As used in sections 4-6, 4-7 and 4-8, the term "department head"
199 means Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, Commissioner
200 of Administrative Services, Commissioner of Revenue Services,
201 Banking Commissioner, Commissioner of Children and Families,
202 Commissioner of Consumer Protection, Commissioner of Correction,
203 Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, State Board

204 of Education, Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public
 205 Protection, Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection,
 206 Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Public Health,
 207 Insurance Commissioner, Labor Commissioner, Commissioner of
 208 Mental Health and Addiction Services, Commissioner of Social Services,
 209 Commissioner of Developmental Services, Commissioner of Motor
 210 Vehicles, Commissioner of Transportation, Commissioner of Veterans
 211 Affairs, Commissioner of Housing, Commissioner of Rehabilitation
 212 Services, the Commissioner of Early Childhood, the executive director
 213 of the Office of Military Affairs, the executive director of the Office of
 214 Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness and the executive director of
 215 the Technical Education and Career System. As used in sections 4-6 and
 216 4-7, "department head" also means the Commissioner of Education.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	19a-131g
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	4-5
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2022</i>	4-5

Statement of Purpose:

To establish an Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]

Co-Sponsors: SEN. OSTEN, 19th Dist.; REP. RYAN, 139th Dist.
 REP. CONLEY, 40th Dist.; REP. FOSTER, 57th Dist.
 SEN. FLEXER, 29th Dist.; REP. RILEY, 46th Dist.
 REP. DE LA CRUZ, 41st Dist.; SEN. NEEDLEMAN, 33rd Dist.
 REP. SMITH, 48th Dist.; REP. NOLAN, 39th Dist.
 REP. JOHNSON, 49th Dist.; SEN. ANWAR, 3rd Dist.
 REP. HAMPTON, 16th Dist.

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