

**ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 4004**  
**(Fourth Reprint)**

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I herewith return for Assembly Bill No. 4004 (Fourth Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill establishes the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic Task Force on Racial and Health Disparities in the Department of Health ("task force"). The task force will study the ways in which, and the reasons why, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the State's minority and vulnerable communities, and the short-term and long-term consequences of the pandemic on these communities. It will develop strategies to address racial and ethnic disparities in the health arena and propose ways to improve data systems, communication, resource distribution, treatment access, and partnerships so that our minority and vulnerable communities are heard and connected to the resources they need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on minority communities, prompting a number of studies and a presidential task force, commissioned by President Biden on January 21, 2021. The statistics surrounding this issue are indeed alarming and provide an unfortunate reminder of how far we still have to go. I stand with the sponsors of this bill in seeking to explore ways to eliminate existing disparities and commend their commitment to promoting the change necessary to reach health care equity. The recommendations suggested here are proposed with the full support of the bill's sponsors, whose willingness to work together to strengthen the bill underscores their commitment to achieving meaningful reform. These changes appropriately modify the roles of the different branches in the appointment process and revise certain tasks to more closely align with the advisory nature of the task force. My recommended changes supplement the membership of the task force with representatives from additional State entities, including the Division on Civil Rights in the Department of Law and Public Safety, to ensure

that the task force has the benefit of additional relevant Executive Branch expertise and perspectives in carrying out its mission.

Therefore, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 4004 (Fourth Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

- Page 2, Section 1, Line 10: Delete "21" and insert "23"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 21: After "Agency;" insert "a representative of the Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Law and Public Safety; a representative of the Division on Civil Rights in the Department of Law and Public Safety;"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 23: After "the" insert "Governor, upon recommendation by the"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 24: Delete "appointed" and insert "recommended"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 26: Delete "appointed" and insert "recommended"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 29: After "by the" insert "Governor, upon recommendation by the"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 30: Delete "appointed" and insert "recommended"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 32: Delete "appointed" and insert "recommended"
- Page 3, Section 2, Line 44: After "b." insert "study and make recommendations to"

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor