

HOUSE BILL 141

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5lr1364

(PRE-FILED)

By: **Delegate Vogel**

Requested: October 23, 2024

Introduced and read first time: January 8, 2025

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the State Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation to study
4 and make recommendations related to loneliness and isolation experienced by
5 individuals in the State; and generally relating to the Task Force on Loneliness and
6 Isolation.

7 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
8 That:

9 (a) There is a Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation.

10 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

11 (1) two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of
12 the Senate;

13 (2) two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of
14 the House;

15 (3) the Secretary of Human Services, or the Secretary's designee;

16 (4) the Deputy Secretary for Behavioral Health, or the Deputy Secretary's
17 designee; and

18 (5) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

19 (i) two representatives of an alliance of private and public entities
20 in the State that recognize the importance of, and need for, addressing loneliness and social
21 disconnectedness among residents of all ages across the State;

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



- 1 (ii) one dining hall manager of a soup kitchen in a suburban area of
2 the State;
- 3 (iii) one high school teacher in the State;
- 4 (iv) three students attending a high school in the State, of whom:
- 5 1. one shall be a student who identifies as a member of the
6 LGBTQIA+ community;
- 7 2. one shall be a student who identifies as female; and
- 8 3. one shall be a student who identifies as male;
- 9 (v) one student who is enrolled in a school of public health at an
10 institution of higher education in the State;
- 11 (vi) one student who is enrolled in a school of social work at an
12 institution of higher education in the State;
- 13 (vii) one resident of an assisted living facility for veterans in the
14 State;
- 15 (viii) one resident of an assisted living facility located in a suburban
16 town of the State;
- 17 (ix) one administrator of a senior center in the State;
- 18 (x) one librarian from a library in an urban area of the State;
- 19 (xi) one librarian from a library in a rural area of the State;
- 20 (xii) one representative of an organization that serves children in an
21 urban area of the State;
- 22 (xiii) one representative of an organization that represents
23 municipalities in the State;
- 24 (xiv) one representative of an organization that represents small
25 towns in the State;
- 26 (xv) one representative of an organization in the State that is working
27 on policies to improve planning and zoning laws to create an inclusive society and improve
28 access to transit-oriented development in the State;

1 (xvi) one representative of an organization in the State that is working
2 to improve and create more walkable and accessible main streets in towns and
3 municipalities in the State;

4 (xvii) one representative of an organization in the State that advocates
5 for individuals with a physical disability;

6 (xviii) one individual who is an expert in digital health and identifying
7 safe digital education;

8 (xix) one representative of an organization in the State that develops
9 mobile applications that are intended to address loneliness and isolation;

10 (xx) one representative of an organization that is exploring the use of
11 technology to address loneliness and isolation;

12 (xxi) one psychiatrist who treats adolescents in the State;

13 (xxii) one psychiatrist who treats adults in the State; and

14 (xxiii) one social worker who practices in an urban area of the State.

15 (c) The members of the Task Force shall elect cochair(s) of the Task Force from
16 among the members of the Task Force.

17 (d) The Maryland Department of Health shall provide staff for the Task Force.

18 (e) A member of the Task Force:

19 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

20 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
21 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

22 (f) The Task Force shall:

23 (1) evaluate the causes of and other factors contributing to the sense of
24 loneliness and isolation experienced by individuals in the State;

25 (2) evaluate methods of preventing and eliminating the sense of isolation
26 and loneliness experienced by individuals in the State;

27 (3) recommend local activities, systems, and structures to combat isolation
28 and loneliness in the State, including opportunities for organizing or enhancing in-person
29 gatherings within communities, especially for individuals who have been living in isolation
30 for extended periods of time; and

1 (4) make recommendations regarding the possibility of creating
2 municipal-based social connection committees to address the challenges of and potential
3 solutions for combatting isolation and loneliness experienced by individuals in the State.

4 (g) On or before June 30, 2026, the Task Force shall report its findings and
5 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State
6 Government Article, to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and
7 Government Operations Committee.

8 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
9 1, 2025. It shall remain effective for a period of 2 years and, at the end of June 30, 2027,
10 this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and
11 of no further force and effect.