

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH40366-MV-16

Short Title: Task Force/Fair Publishing of Reviews. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Pike.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON THE FAIR PUBLISHING OF CROWD-SOURCED REVIEWS TO STUDY THE PRACTICES OF PUBLISHING PLATFORMS AND THE IMPACT OF THOSE PRACTICES ON NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESSES AND CONSUMERS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. There is established the North Carolina Task Force on the Fair Publishing of Crowd-Sourced Reviews (Task Force). The purpose of the Task Force is to (i) study the practices of platforms publishing crowd-sourced reviews, (ii) study the relationship between those practices and the public's ability to accurately assess businesses, and (iii) recommend initiatives that are appropriately compliant with federal law but that are tailored to needs and goals of North Carolina consumers and businesses. In carrying out this study, the Task Force shall examine the following:

- (1) The substance and ordering of reviews published by a platform as compared to the substance and ordering of reviews submitted to the publishing platform.
- (2) The correlation, if any, between revenue received by the platform operator from businesses and the substance and ordering of reviews for those businesses as compared to other businesses reviewed on the platform.
- (3) The ability of business owners to request and acquire from the platform contact information for reviewers leaving negative reviews.
- (4) The financial cost to North Carolina businesses and consumers of any publishing practices the Task Force deems unfair and the comparative projected impact of implementing fairer practices. The Task Force shall give particular attention to the costs and projected impacts for North Carolina small businesses.
- (5) Feasible steps the State can take to encourage or require fairer publishing practices.

SECTION 2. The Task Force shall consist of 13 members to be appointed as follows:

- (1) One Representative and one public member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (2) One Senator and one public member appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (3) The leader of the minority party in the House of Representatives, or the leader's designee, and one public member appointed by the minority party leader.



- 1 (4) The leader of the minority party in the Senate, or the leader's designee, and
- 2 one public member appointed by the minority party leader.
- 3 (5) Five attorneys licensed to practice law in North Carolina appointed by the
- 4 Business Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association.

5 **SECTION 3.** The Task Force shall have two cochairs, one designated by the Speaker
6 of the House of Representatives and one designated by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
7 The Task Force shall meet upon the joint call of the cochairs, and the cochairs shall convene the
8 first meeting as soon as practicable after appointments have been made.

9 **SECTION 4.** The Legislative Services Commission shall grant adequate meeting
10 space to the Task Force in the State Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building. The
11 Legislative Services Commission shall allocate from a portion of the funds appropriated to the
12 General Assembly sufficient funds for the operation of the Task Force. The Legislative Services
13 Commission, through the Legislative Services Officer, shall assign professional staff to assist the
14 Task Force in its work. The Directors of Legislative Assistants for the House of Representatives
15 and the Senate shall assign clerical staff to the Task Force, and the expenses relating to the clerical
16 employees shall be borne by the Task Force. The Task Force may contract for professional,
17 clerical, or consultant services as provided by G.S. 120-32.02. Members of the Task Force shall
18 receive subsistence and travel expenses at the rates provided in G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, or 138-6, as
19 appropriate.

20 **SECTION 5.** The Task Force shall submit a final report on the results of its study
21 and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the General Assembly on or before
22 May 1, 2024, by filing a copy of the report with the Offices of the Speaker of the House of
23 Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The Task Force shall terminate on
24 May 1, 2024, or upon the filing of the final report, whichever occurs first.

25 **SECTION 6.** This act is effective when it becomes law.