

ASSEMBLY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 672

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 19, 2022

The Assembly Higher Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 672 (1R), with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill would create a five-year Water Apprenticeship, Training, and Employment Resources (“WATER”) Pilot Program in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) to provide grants to support funding for newly-established adult apprenticeship programs in the water infrastructure, water utilities, and other water-related sectors, focusing on underserved and underrepresented communities. Any organizational sponsor of an apprenticeship program, including a business, labor organization, college or university, workforce training provider, non-profit organization, public utility, local government entity or authority, or trade organization, would be eligible to receive a grant, provided that they have secured an industry partner or a monetary or in-kind funding contribution.

Under the bill, the program is required to coordinate with the Center for Workforce Innovation in Construction established by the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development as part of the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative.

The DOLWD will be required to begin accepting grant applications not more than six months after the effective date of this bill, and initial grant awards are to be issued no later than one year after the bill’s effective date. The DOLWD would be required to rank eligible applicants for grants based upon each applicant’s potential to: (1) reach a broad audience through its recruitment and outreach efforts; (2) significantly increase enrollment in, and the completion of, the apprenticeship program, including among members of underserved and underrepresented communities; and (3) fill existing needs for skilled workers in the market.

One year after the bill’s effective date, and each year thereafter for the duration of the pilot grant program, the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development would be required to submit to the

Governor and the Legislature a report that evaluates the results of the WATER Pilot Program and its effectiveness.

The bill would create a special, non-lapsing fund in the Department of the Treasury, which would be known as the "WATER Fund," and which would be used to collect and invest moneys for the purposes of the bill. The bill would also direct the Department of the Treasury to solicit grants and donations to the fund from interested public or private sources. The bill appropriates \$1 million from the General Fund to the WATER Fund to effectuate the purposes of this bill.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill to:

- require the program to coordinate with the Center for Workforce Innovation in Construction established by the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development as part of the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative; and
- appropriate \$1 million from the General Fund to the WATER Fund established under the bill.