

# SENATE ECONOMIC GROWTH COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

## ASSEMBLY, No. 1775

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: NOVEMBER 3, 2022

The Senate Economic Growth Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1775 (1R), with committee amendments.

As amended and reported, this bill requires the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to establish a schedule of days and hours of operation, a toll-free telephone number, and a downloadable application on its Internet website to facilitate the receipt of benefits under the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The bill requires the DCA to prepare and annually update a handbook containing the governing policies and eligibility requirements for LIHEAP and to provide training sessions about the program on a quarterly basis. Within six months of the date of enactment, the bill also requires the DCA to make available all LIHEAP application materials, including the downloadable application, in each of the five most commonly spoken languages in the State, as determined by the DCA.

Under the bill, all employees of agencies designated by the DCA to obtain, review, and process applications for LIHEAP benefits would be required to read and adhere to the handbook, and the supervisors of these agencies, who oversee LIHEAP work, would be required to attend the quarterly training sessions. An agency that fails to substantially comply with these requirements may be disqualified by the DCA from serving as a designated LIHEAP agency.

This bill requires the DCA to establish an open and competitive process utilizing an annual request for proposal to award grants to qualified nonprofit organizations to serve as agencies that obtain, review, and process LIHEAP applications. The annual request for proposal would be required to explain the necessary qualifications that a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization is required to meet in order to be approved to serve as an agency that obtains, reviews, and processes LIHEAP applications. The annual request for proposal would also be required to be fully compliant with federal laws and regulations and would be subject to final approval by the Director of the Division of Housing and Community Resources in the DCA.

The committee amendments provide that within six months of the date of enactment, the DCA would be required to make available all LIHEAP application materials, including the downloadable application, in each of the five most commonly spoken languages in the State, as determined by the DCA. The amendments also provide technical changes to the bill.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2910, which was also amended and reported by the committee on this date.