

# ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

**ASSEMBLY, No. 5097**

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: MAY 18, 2023

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5097 (1R).

This bill would establish a tourism attraction trail sign program to provide awareness of, and directional guidance to, tourism attractions throughout the State through roadway signs. The location of the signs will support a trail-like path throughout the State of various indoor and outdoor tourism attractions.

The bill would require the Division of Travel and Tourism in the Department of State (division), in consultation with the Department of Transportation, to operate the trail sign program. Special consideration will be given to tourism locations that are in close geographic proximity with one another in order to create an easily accessible trail for visitors to travel from one attraction to the next. A person may apply to the division to have a trail sign installed to identify and direct persons to their business.

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts in the Department of State would be required to establish a visual arts competition to gather original artwork to be placed on the trail signs. The council is to establish the terms of the competition, including submission requirements and selection. After the completion of the design competition, the council is to report the final selection of artwork to the division.

This bill would also establish a sign program for historical sites or historical districts to be operated by the division, in consultation with the Division of Parks and Forestry in the Department of Environmental Protection, the Historic Preservation Office in the Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Historic Trust in the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Transportation, and the New Jersey Historical Commission. The signs may include an identifiably historic theme and a color code to indicate what war or historic time-period relates to the site or district.

The division will be responsible for any costs associated with the sign programs established by this bill. The bill would authorize the division to raise funds, through direct solicitation or other fundraising events, either alone or with other groups, and to accept donations, gifts, grants, and bequests from individuals, corporations, foundations,

governmental agencies, public and private organizations, and institutions, in order to defray the division's administrative expenses, and for the purposes of producing, installing, and maintaining the signs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that this bill will result in expenditure increases for the Division of Travel and Tourism in the Department of State and revenue increases for a Sign Programs Fund administered by the Department of the Treasury to be used to pay for these expenditures.

The bill requires the Division of Travel and Tourism in the Department of State to pay for all program costs and authorizes the division to solicit and accept grants, donations, gifts, bequests, or other financing to defray all costs, including administrative and capital expenses.

The Department of the Treasury will administer a Sign Programs Fund to accept monies for each program and, when appropriated, remit funding to the Division of Travel and Tourism in the Department of the State to pay program costs.

The OLS does not have the information to determine exactly how much these programs will cost nor how much external financing the division's fundraising will yield. The OLS notes however, that administrative expenses for a similar program operated by the Department of Transportation cost approximately \$300,000 annually. The department also pays \$2.1 million for a Sign Inspection Program and \$3.5 million for Sign Program capital expenses annually.