

SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 285

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 13, 2022

The Senate Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 285.

As reported by the committee, this bill requires the State Office of Emergency Management to establish a permanent unit in the office to serve the needs of State residents with access and functional needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on residents of New Jersey with disabilities, older adults, and other at-risk groups, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, as well as the consequences of other types of disasters and emergencies.

In 2018, the CDC estimated that 24.6% of New Jersey adult residents had a disability, which is a sizeable portion of the State's population. The economic impact on people with disabilities and their families, as well as the burden on individual health as a result of the pandemic, are an existential threat to the disability community. Accordingly, it is in the public interest for the State to engage in comprehensive planning and coordination within the northern, central, and southern regions of the State to support residents with access and functional needs.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2022-2023 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.