

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO SENATE, No. 2016

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 23, 2022

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2016, with committee amendments.

As amended by the committee, this bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to maintain an outreach plan for the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to conduct additional outreach programs, subject to available funds. SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a nutrition assistance program that serves as a safety net for low-income households.

Specifically, the bill directs that the outreach plan focus on increasing potential beneficiaries' access to: 1) information regarding the availability of SNAP, the criteria for eligibility for SNAP benefits, and the various methods to apply for SNAP benefits; and 2) the technological means to apply for SNAP benefits.

Additional outreach programs may include:

1) establishing a SNAP Navigator Program, the purpose of which will be to recruit, train, and support SNAP application navigators, via a process and method determined by the Commission of Human Services;

2) making available training to the appropriate staff at community-based organizations regarding the necessary steps to complete and submit a SNAP application, through all available methods, including online and by telephone. Trained staff are to assist clients with the SNAP application process;

3) partnering with community-based organizations to increase client access to computers and the online SNAP application;

4) providing SNAP information and resources to beneficiaries of public assistance programs who are served by the department and by county welfare agencies, and who are likely to be eligible for, but are not currently receiving, SNAP benefits; and

5) conducting a public awareness campaign using available media, including television, radio, print, and social media, to inform the public of the availability of SNAP.

As reported by the committee with amendments, Senate Bill No. 2016 is identical to Assembly Bill No. 2361 (1R), which was also reported by the committee on this date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to maintain a SNAP outreach program, consistent with federal requirements, and to conduct additional outreach programs, subject to available funds. As introduced, the bill required the DHS to develop and implement a comprehensive SNAP outreach plan, in consultation and cooperation with community based organizations and county welfare agencies.

The committee amendments provide that the list of outreach plan activities listed in the bill are permissive, rather than mandatory.

The committee amendments revise the provisions of the SNAP Navigator Grant Program to make it an optional outreach plan activity, to eliminate the grant component and the corresponding State appropriation for the grant program, and to provide that the purpose of the program is to recruit, train, and support SNAP application navigators, via a process and method determined by the Commissioner of Human Services. As introduced, the bill provided that purpose of the SNAP Navigator Grant Program was to distribute grant funding to community based organizations to support the employment of SNAP application navigators.

The committee amendments add the following additional potential outreach plan activity under the amended bill: conducting a public awareness campaign using available media, including television, radio, print, and social media, to inform the public of the availability of SNAP.

The committee amendments eliminate the definition of “county welfare agency” from the bill.

The committee amendments revise the provision of the bill directing the commissioner to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the provisions of the bill to make the provision permissive, rather than mandatory. The amendments also provide that the commissioner may adopt rules and regulations that will take effect immediately upon filing with the Office of Administrative Law, which rules and regulations will remain in effect for a period not to exceed 18 months, and may, thereafter, be amended, adopted, or readopted in accordance with the provisions of the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).

The committee amendments update the bill’s title and synopsis to reflect these changes.