

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2844

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: NOVEMBER 30, 2023

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 2844 (1R).

As amended by the committee, this bill increases the maximum number of respite care service hours funded through the Department of Children and Families (department) for certain families.

Under the bill, the family of a child that is eligible to receive respite care services funded through the department, is to be eligible to receive up to 90 hours of respite care services, provided by either an agency-hired or self-hired respite worker, over a 90-day period through funding provided by the department.

The Commissioner of Children and Families (commissioner) is to use available State and federal funds to effectuate the bill's provisions.

The bill defines "respite care" to mean the provision of temporary, short-term care for, or the supervision of, an eligible child on behalf of the caregiver, in emergencies or on an intermittent basis to relieve the daily stresses and demands of caring for a child with a functional impairment. Respite care may be provided hourly or daily, may be provided by an agency-hired or self-hired respite worker or a volunteer, but may not exceed service and cost limitations as determined by the commissioner.

Under the bill, "agency-hired respite worker" means a respite care worker who is recruited, trained, and employed by a qualified agency under contract with the department; and "self-hired respite worker" means a respite care worker who is recruited, trained, and paid directly by a family of a child that is eligible for respite care services

As amended and reported by the committee, Senate Bill No. 2844 (1R) is identical to Assembly Bill No. 1902 (2R), which was also amended and reported by the committee on this date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to remove the \$13 million appropriation from the General Fund to the department to effectuate the provisions of the bill.

The committee amendments update the title and synopsis of the bill to reflect the changes made by committee amendment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services estimates that annual State expenditures will increase between \$11.8 million and \$17.8 million to provide eligible families with up to 30 additional hours of respite services over a 90-day authorization period. The lower end of the range represents the cost increase to the State if all services are provided by a self-hired respite worker, while the upper range represents services provided by an agency-hired respite worker. Since not every family receiving respite services will be authorized for the maximum number of respite service hours available, and because 66 percent of respite services are currently provided by less costly self-hired respite workers, actual annual costs will likely skew toward the lower end of the range.

To the extent that families of children with intellectual or developmental disabilities who are enrolled in the NJ FamilyCare program are authorized for respite care services, federal reimbursement will be available for 50 percent of qualifying State Medicaid expenditures on respite care services.