

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO **SENATE, No. 2891**

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 6, 2022

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 2891.

As amended by the committee, this bill expands the scope of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (ombudsman) and appropriates \$1 million.

Specifically, the bill provides that the office of the ombudsman will oversee all long-term care facility residents, not just the elderly. The bill updates certain statutory references to reflect this change, and additionally removes references to “patients” and “clients” of a facility.

Current law provides that, upon completing an investigation, the ombudsman’s findings and recommended action are to be submitted to the Commissioner of Health or the Commissioner of Human Services, as appropriate, as well as to any other governmental agency that regulates or operates the facility. The bill revises this requirement to provide that the report be furnished to these entities upon request, and upon substantiation of the report or complaint. The bill further provides that the report may also be provided to the complainant, if the resident or the resident’s legal representative consents to the complainant receiving a copy of the report. The bill provides that, in addition to obtaining the name and address of a person on a consent form, the ombudsman is to make reasonable efforts to obtain the person’s phone number and email address.

As amended, the bill removes a requirement for the ombudsman to provide notice before inspecting the premises, books, files, medical records, or other records of a facility or government agency during the course of an investigation.

The bill revises a requirement for the Legislature to review the development, administration, and operation of the office through certain standing reference committees to instead make the Legislature directly responsible for the review.

The bill appropriates to the ombudsman \$700,000 for the purpose of employing additional staff; purchasing, renting, or leasing vehicles

or other transportation; and meeting such other expenses as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the office. Further, the bill appropriates \$300,000 to the ombudsman for the purpose of undertaking a Statewide advertising campaign to promote the ombudsman's Volunteer Advocate Program.

The bill makes various technical and stylistic changes involving grammar and citation.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments remove a requirement from current law that the ombudsman provide notice before inspecting the premises, books, files, medical records, or other records of a facility or government agency during the course of an investigation.

The committee amendments make various technical changes involving grammar and punctuation.