

ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1185

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 13, 2025

The Assembly Judiciary Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1185.

This bill provides for enhanced penalties for the crime of engaging in prostitution as a patron, commonly referred to as “johns.” Under current law, a person commits this offense if the actor engages in prostitution as a patron, or one who purchases sexual activity with another person in exchange for something of economic value, or the offer or acceptance of an offer to engage in sexual activity in exchange for something of economic value.

Currently, a violation of this provision is a disorderly persons offense for a first offense, punishable by up to six months imprisonment, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both. For a second or third violation, it is a crime of the fourth degree, punishable by up to 18 months imprisonment, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. For a fourth violation, it is a crime of the third degree, punishable by three to five years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$15,000, or both. In addition to any other disposition for the offense, N.J.S.A.2C:34-1.2 assesses additional penalties upon persons convicted of engaging in prostitution as a patron, which include an assessment of \$500 and participation in a prostitution offender program.

This bill increases prostitution by a patron to a crime of the fourth degree, except that a fourth violation remains a crime of the third degree. In addition, the bill provides that any fine collected will be forwarded to the Department of the Treasury to be deposited in the “Human Trafficking Survivor’s Assistance Fund” (the HTSAF) established by N.J.S.A.52:17B-238. All monies deposited in the HTSAF are required to be used to provide services to victims of human trafficking, to promote awareness of human trafficking, and to develop, operate, maintain, and distribution of training courses, educational materials, and training programs.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.