

ASSEMBLY, No. 2386

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman WILLIAM W. SPEARMAN

District 5 (Camden and Gloucester)

Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY

District 18 (Middlesex)

Assemblyman REGINALD W. ATKINS

District 20 (Union)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblyman Danielsen, Assemblywomen McCoy, Murphy and

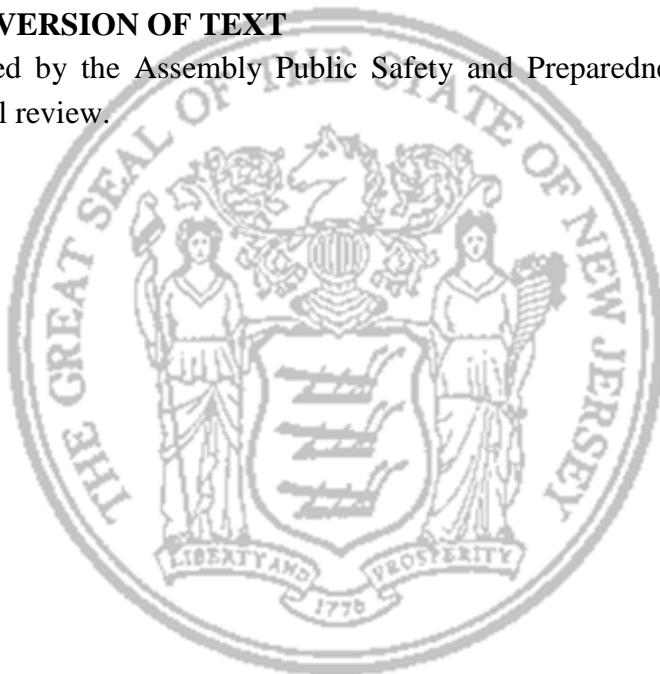
Assemblyman Barlas

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Firefighter Critical Mental Health Assistance Grant Program; appropriates \$1 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Public Safety and Preparedness Committee with technical review.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/7/2024)

1 AN ACT establishing the Firefighter Critical Mental Health
2 Assistance Grant Program, supplementing Title 30 of the
3 Revised Statutes, and making an appropriation.
4

5 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:
7

8 1. The Legislature finds and declares:

9 a. Due to the nature of firefighting, with its associated risks,
10 danger, and stress, firefighters face a high probability of developing
11 post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses.

12 b. Firefighters commonly feel that disclosure of mental illness
13 will result in negative professional consequences up to and
14 including job loss, creating a culture in which firefighters often do
15 not divulge mental health struggles and do not seek appropriate and
16 necessary treatment.

17 c. Family members of firefighters often face unique stressors
18 related to their loved ones' employment and may have an elevated
19 need for mental health services.

20 d. For the safety of firefighters, their families, and the members
21 of the public served by firefighters, it is critical for there to be
22 systems in place that address mental health and establish an
23 environment in which firefighters and their families feel
24 comfortable seeking mental health services.
25

26 2. As used in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
27 Legislature as this bill):

28 "Family member" means a spouse, domestic partner, child, or
29 parent of, or any other family member related by blood or by law to
30 a firefighter who resides in the same home as the firefighter.

31 "Firefighter" means any full-time paid firefighter employed by a
32 public fire department.

33 "Mental health provider" means a psychiatrist, a psychologist, an
34 advanced practice nurse practitioner with a specialty in psychiatric
35 mental health, a clinical social worker, a professional counselor, or
36 a marriage and family therapist who is licensed to provide mental
37 health services pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes.

38 "Public fire department" means any department of a
39 municipality, county, fire district or the State or any agency thereof
40 having employees engaged in firefighting.
41

42 3. a. There is hereby established in the Department of Human
43 Services the Firefighter Critical Mental Health Assistance Grant
44 Program. The program shall award grants to mental health
45 providers to provide confidential mental health services to
46 firefighters or members of their immediate families who are in a
47 mental health crisis or suicidal.

1 b. The Commissioner of Human Services shall develop an
2 application by which a mental health services provider may apply
3 for a grant for funding to provide mental health services pursuant to
4 subsection a. of this section. The commissioner shall establish
5 selection criteria for the awarding of grants under the program.
6 Consideration shall be given to the geographical location of mental
7 health providers and the areas where they provide services in order
8 to facilitate patients traveling less than one hour to receive mental
9 health services, to the greatest extent possible. The commissioner
10 shall provide notice of the availability of funding for this program
11 and make the application available on the department's Internet
12 website. Upon receipt of an application, the commissioner shall
13 review the application and, subject to the availability of funds,
14 award a grant to each approved grant applicant.

15 c. The commissioner shall establish program guidelines for the
16 provision of mental health services pursuant to subsection a. of this
17 section and shall publish a list of approved mental health providers
18 on the department's Internet website.

19

20 4. There is appropriated from the General Fund \$1 million to
21 the Department of Human Services to fulfill the provisions of
22 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

23

24 5. This act shall take effect on the first day of the fourth month
25 next following the date of enactment, except that the commissioner
26 may take any anticipatory administrative action in advance thereof
27 as shall be necessary for the implementation of this act.