

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
SENATE, No. 991
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: FEBRUARY 15, 2024

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Establishes permanent unit in Office of Emergency Management to address access and functional needs of residents related to disasters and emergencies.
- Type of Impact:** Annual State and local expenditure increases.
- Agencies Affected:** Department of Law and Public Safety; County and Municipal Offices of Emergency Management.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	
Annual State Expenditure Increase	At least \$500,000
Annual Local Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that the bill would result in indeterminate annual State expenditure increases for staffing and operations related to a new unit in the Office of Emergency Management in the Department of Law and Public Safety.
- This bill requires the unit to be staffed by one full-time supervisor and three full-time planners to assist the needs of the South, Central, and North Jersey regions in serving State residents with access and functional needs. The OLS assumes that these staffing costs will be at least \$500,000 annually.
- Additionally, county and municipal offices of emergency management, in turn, may experience a recurring workload increase, as the bill requires the State Office of Emergency Management to coordinate with each county and municipal emergency management agency to take appropriate steps to determine, expand, and implement best practices to be utilized in support of residents with access and functional needs.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the State Office of Emergency Management to establish a permanent unit in the office to serve the needs of State residents with access and functional needs.

Under the provisions of the bill, the unit's responsibilities are to include:

(1) determining the needs of residents with access and functional needs, before, during, and after disasters and emergencies;

(2) determining the Statewide availability of relevant resources and assistance;

(3) assessing and addressing the ability of residents with access and functional needs to access available resources and assistance; and

(4) coordinating with county and local offices of emergency management and relevant resource providers to determine, expand, and implement best practices to support residents with access and functional needs.

The bill provides that the unit would consist of one full-time supervisor and a staff of three full-time planners to assist the needs of the South, Central, and North Jersey regions in serving State residents with access and functional needs.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS finds that the bill would result in indeterminate annual State expenditure increases for staffing and operations related to a new unit in the Office of Emergency Management in the Department of Law and Public Safety.

The OLS notes that although the Office of Emergency Management is currently responsible for supporting all residents of New Jersey, the bill requires the establishment of a dedicated unit consisting of one full-time supervisor and a staff of three full-time planners to assist the needs of the South, Central, and North Jersey regions in serving State residents with access and functional needs. The OLS assumes that these staffing costs will be at least \$500,000 annually.

The unit will have recurring workload requirements that include: a) determining the needs of residents with access and functional needs before, during, and after disasters and emergencies; b) determining the Statewide availability of relevant resources and assistance; c) assessing and addressing the ability of residents with access and functional needs to access available resources and assistance; and d) coordinating with county and local offices of emergency management and relevant resource providers to determine, expand, and implement best practices to support residents with access and functional needs.

Further, the Department of Human Services' internal Office of Emergency Management serves New Jersey's special need individuals and request that individuals with disabilities sign up with New Jersey's special needs registry so that first responders and community providers have an up-to-date list of where to find them in the case of an emergency. The OLS does not know to what extent the functions of these two State organizations may overlap.

Additionally, county and municipal offices of emergency management, in turn, may experience a recurring workload increase, as the bill requires the State Office of Emergency Management to coordinate with each county and municipal emergency management agency to

take appropriate steps to determine, expand, and implement best practices to be utilized in support of residents with access and functional needs. The bill will not directly affect counties and municipalities that are already in compliance with this requirement. Currently non-conforming counties and municipalities, however, will experience a workload increase that may or may not result in additional recurring expenditures, depending on each entity's resource allocation policies.

Background – Currently, several State initiatives support public emergency response plans for individuals with special needs:

- “Register Ready – New Jersey’s Special Needs Registry for Disasters” allows New Jersey residents with disabilities or access and functional needs and their families, friends, and associates to provide information to emergency response agencies, so emergency responders can better plan to serve these residents in a disaster or other emergency.
- P.L.2011, c.178 permits each county in the State to establish a central registry for residents with special needs who require additional assistance during an emergency. Each central registry created is to be maintained by individual county offices of emergency management and is to be composed of information voluntarily provided by each registrant, including, but not limited to, the registrant's address, telephone number, and particular condition or assistance needs. These registries are to be included in the Emergency Operations Plan required pursuant to P.L.1989, c.222.
- P.L.2021, c.292 requires the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Health, the Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families, licensed service providers, and the State Office of Emergency Management in the Department of Law and Public Safety to develop and oversee the implementation of a public emergency response plan for licensed service providers in the State.

Section: *Law and Public Safety*

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).