

SENATE, No. 991

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator LINDA R. GREENSTEIN

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Senator NELLIE POU

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

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SYNOPSIS

Establishes permanent unit in Office of Emergency Management to address access and functional needs of residents related to disasters and emergencies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Senate Law and Public Safety Committee with technical review.



1 **AN ACT** concerning the provision of disaster and emergency related
2 assistance to State residents with access and functional needs and
3 supplementing chapter 9 of Appendix A.

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 that:

9 a. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought devastation to the
10 State of New Jersey, with hundreds of thousands of positive cases,
11 high levels of hospitalization, and a tragic number of deaths.

12 b. The pandemic has had profound economic impacts across
13 the State, including on government entities, non-profit
14 organizations, businesses of every size across all industries,
15 families, and individuals.

16 c. Residents of New Jersey with disabilities, older adults, and
17 other at-risk groups, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to
18 COVID-19 as well as the consequences of other types of
19 emergencies and disasters, have been heavily affected.

20 d. In 2018, the CDC estimated that 24.6% of New Jersey adult
21 residents had a disability, which is a sizeable portion of the State's
22 population.

23 e. The economic impact on people with disabilities and their
24 families, as well as the burden on individual health from the
25 pandemic are an existential threat to the disability community.

26 f. Protection of the State's vulnerable populations from the
27 COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters or emergencies that may
28 take place in the future is a matter of urgency.

29 g. It is therefore in the public interest for the State to engage in
30 comprehensive planning and coordination within the northern,
31 central, and southern regions of the State to support residents with
32 access and functional needs.

33
34 2. a. The State Office of Emergency Management shall
35 establish a unit in the office to serve the needs of State residents
36 with access and functional needs. The unit's responsibilities shall
37 include:

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

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

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

46 (4) coordinating with county and local offices of emergency
47 management and relevant resource providers to determine, expand,

- 1 and implement best practices to be utilized in support of residents
2 with access and functional needs.
- 3 b. The unit shall consist of one full-time supervisor and a staff
4 of three full-time planners to assist with the needs of the northern,
5 central, and southern regions of the State in serving State residents
6 with access and functional needs.
- 7 c. For the purposes of this section, a “resident with access and
8 functional needs” means:
- 9 (1) a person with a disability;
10 (2) an older adult;
11 (3) a person with limited English proficiency;
12 (4) a person with limited access to transportation that would
13 enable the person to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and
14 mitigate the effects of a disaster or emergency; or
15 (5) a person with limited access to financial resources that
16 would enable the person to prepare for, respond to, recover from,
17 and mitigate the effects of a disaster or emergency.
- 18
- 19 3. This act shall take effect on the first day of the fourth month
20 next following the date of enactment, except that the State Office of
21 Emergency Management shall take any anticipatory action in
22 advance as shall be necessary for the implementation of this act.