

SENATE ECONOMIC GROWTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 4709

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 11, 2025

The Senate Economic Growth Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 4709.

As amended and reported, this bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) together with the Department of the Treasury (treasury) to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Board of Public Utilities (BPU), and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients. The memorandum of understanding is to require DHS and the treasury to provide information to DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients concerning recipients of or households eligible for any of the following needs-based public assistance programs: (1) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; (2) Work First New Jersey; (3) the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; (4) the federal supplemental security income program; and (5) any other State or federal needs-based public assistance program, as provided for in the memorandum of understanding.

The information provided by DHS and the treasury is required to include information necessary to enroll those recipients of or households eligible for needs-based public assistance into certain utility bill payment assistance programs administered by DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients.

Based on the information received from DHS and the treasury pursuant to the memorandums of understanding, DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients are required to review the eligibility criteria and recipient data for any needs-based public assistance program administered by the respective agency to identify the information necessary to enroll those recipients of needs-based public assistance programs into certain utility bill payment assistance programs.

This bill requires DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides

ongoing assistance to recipients to, pursuant to the memorandum of understanding and only to the extent permitted by federal law, automatically enroll eligible households into the Universal Service Fund, the Winter Termination Program, the Summer Termination Program, and any other State utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients. Under the bill, a State agency is not to automatically enroll a household into a utility bill payment assistance program that provides a one-time grant or other limited-use assistance.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments to the bill:

(1) provide that the bill's requirements apply only to utility bill payment assistance programs that provide ongoing assistance to recipients. As introduced, the bill's requirements also applied to energy efficiency programs;

(2) require the treasury to enter into the memorandum of understanding required by the bill;

(3) clarify that the memorandum of understanding is to require DHS and the treasury to provide information to DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients concerning recipients of or households eligible for any needs-based public assistance programs, including those outlined in the bill. As introduced, the bill only required the provision of information concerning recipients of these programs;

(4) require DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients to review the eligibility criteria and recipient data for any needs-based public assistance program administered by the respective agency to identify information concerning recipients of those programs for the purpose of automatic enrollment into certain utility bill payment assistance programs;

(5) clarify that, pursuant to the memorandum of understanding, DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients are required to automatically enroll eligible households, rather than recipients, in the following utility bill payment assistance programs that the agencies administer: Universal Service Fund, the Winter Termination Program, the Summer Termination Program, and any other State utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients;

(6) prohibits State agencies from automatically enrolling households into a utility bill payment assistance program that provides a one-time grant or other limited-use assistance;

(7) revise the bill's title and synopsis; and

(8) make technical changes.