

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 4709

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 8, 2026

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 4709 (1R).

As amended, this bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) 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 to provide information concerning recipients of or household eligible for certain needs-based public assistance, including, but not limited to, the following programs: (1) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; (2) Work First New Jersey; (3) the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; (4) the supplemental security income program.

The information provided by DHS would be 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 pursuant to the memorandums of understanding, and a review of programs administered by the DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program, the DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients would be required, to the extent permitted by federal law, to 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.

This bill would take effect on the first day of the sixth month next following enactment, except that DHS, DCA, BPU, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program or energy efficiency program may, as necessary, take action to enter into a memorandum of understanding as required by the bill, and establish rules and regulations in advance of the effective date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments to the bill remove the requirement for the Department of the Treasury to enter into the memorandum of understanding required by the bill.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that the State will incur additional indeterminate costs, which may be in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually, associated with an increase in recipients of utility assistance through the Universal Service Fund due to the bill's requirement to automatically enroll eligible households, and increased administrative costs associated with the review of eligibility and recipient data for certain needs-based public assistance programs, including certain utility bill payment assistance programs.