SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]
ASSEMBLY, No. 1517

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 8, 2026

The Senate Environment and Energy Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1517 (1R).

This bill would establish the New Jersey Native Seed Commission in the Department of Agriculture (commission).

The purpose of the commission would be to develop a plan to: (1) increase the production of native seeds in the State; (2) increase the use of native seeds in public land management, roadside landscaping, reforestation, habitat restoration, and other projects as determined by the commission; and (3) ensure that native seeds are commercially available in the State at a reasonable cost and in adequate supply.

The commission would consist of 11 members, including the Secretary of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, and the Commissioner of Transportation, each of whom would serve ex officio, or their respective designees, and other stakeholders and experts.

No later than one year after its organization, the commission would be required to prepare and submit to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature, a final report detailing the commission's plan to increase the production and use of native seeds in the State, including any recommendations for legislative or regulatory action necessary to effectuate the plan.

The final report prepared by the commission would include: (1) an assessment of the current and projected demand for native seeds by State agencies, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and private entities; (2) an assessment of the current capacity of New Jersey growers, nurseries, and seed suppliers to meet the demand for native seeds; (3) an analysis of the costs and benefits associated with the use of native seeds in public environmental projects, including those for land management, transportation rights-of-way, roadside landscaping, reforestation, habitat restoration, and stormwater management; (4) an evaluation of the regulatory, logistical, technical, and market barriers to increasing the production, commercial availability, and use of native seeds in the State; (5) recommendations concerning funding mechanisms, procurement standards, market development strategies, and other actions necessary to increase the availability and use of native seeds in New Jersey; and (6) the identification of no fewer than

three pilot project opportunities on lands owned or managed by the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Protection, or other State agencies and public entities.

If the commission's final report included recommendations for regulatory or administrative action, the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Transportation, would be required to submit a follow-up report, within 180 days of receipt of the commission's final report, to the Governor and the Legislature. The follow-up report would evaluate the commission's recommendations, identify any actions already taken by the State to increase the use of native seeds in New Jersey, and identify any future anticipated actions by the State to increase the use of native seeds in New Jersey, as responsive to the commission's report. Both the commission's final report and the State's follow up report would be made available to any interested person at a reasonable cost.

The commission would expire 30 days after submission of its plan under the bill.

As reported by the committee, Assembly Bill No. 1517 (1R) is identical to Senate Bill No. 4636, which was also reported by the committee on this date.