

ASSEMBLY TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND UTILITIES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO ASSEMBLY, No. 3612

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 5, 2026

The Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 3612.

As amended and reported, this bill supplements the FY2027 Appropriations Act to include language appropriating up to \$10 million from the Universal Service Fund, as determined by the Director of the Division of Budget and Accounting, to the NJSHARES – S.M.A.R.T. Program for utility payment assistance, including, but not limited to, utility arrearage assistance. Under the bill, the Commissioner of Community Affairs is to design and establish certain program criteria and guidelines to award grants to eligible homeowners and tenants to enable them to comply with utility obligations. The bill prohibits a homeowner or tenant that is eligible for or receives funding from private insurance or any other available funding opportunity that may be considered a duplication of benefits from receiving utility payment assistance from the appropriated funds.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 2026-2027 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to supplement the FY2027 Appropriations Act, rather than the FY2026 Appropriations Act, and to make technical changes related to how the funds are to be appropriated.