

ASSEMBLY AGING AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3883

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 1, 2026

The Assembly Aging and Human Services Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 3883.

This bill, as amended, requires the Department of Human Services, in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Volunteerism, or any successor entity, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, to modify and expand the State's existing volunteer resources such that information is easily accessible to State residents regarding compliance, via volunteer hours or community service, with NJ FamilyCare and SNAP work requirements under the federal "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," Pub.L.119-21, as well as any subsequent federal regulations or guidance regarding these statutory requirements. At a minimum, these efforts are to include:

- 1) Modifying the existing, web-based HELPNJNOW portal to allow the public to search and apply for bona fide volunteer opportunities that comply with the applicable requirements;
- 2) Engaging and soliciting appropriate entities to identify volunteer opportunities that comply with the applicable requirements;
- 3) Modifying the existing, web-based HELPNJNOW portal so that entities can register and submit volunteer opportunities to be included on the portal itself; and
- 4) Providing a link to the existing, web-based HELPNJNOW portal, as well as information regarding the applicable NJ FamilyCare and SNAP work requirements, on relevant State webpages.

The bill, as amended, also directs the Department of Human Services: 1) to create or modify an existing, web-based mobile friendly resource that allows NJ FamilyCare and SNAP applicants and beneficiaries to submit to the appropriate agency all information and documentation regarding volunteer or community service hours that are necessary to demonstrate compliance with the work requirements under OBBBA; 2) perform annual audit reviews of information and documents submitted under the bill to verify accuracy and that no abuse or malfeasance is being committed; and 3) in consultation with the Governor's Office of Volunteerism and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, to immediately adopt regulations that the Commissioner of Human Services deems necessary to effectuate the purposes of the bill. Additionally, the bill directs the Department

of Human Services and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to establish a system by which volunteer hours and community service acquired by SNAP applicants and beneficiaries can be shared between the departments in order to collaboratively administer the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Program.

The bill, as amended, explicitly states that the State is to be immune from any liability for any injury incurred by a volunteer as a result of an individual's volunteer or community service stemming from the existing, web-based HELPNJNOW portal.

The bill, as amended, appropriates \$50,000 to the Department of Human Services and \$75,000 to the Office of Volunteerism to implement the bill's provisions.

This bill was pre-filed 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 amendments expand the entities that the Department of Human Services is required to collaborate with in implementing the bill's provisions to include the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. As introduced, the Department of Human Services was only required to collaborate with the Governor's Office of Volunteerism located in the Department of State.

The committee amendments require the bill's provisions to comply with any federal regulations or guidance issued under the federal "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," Pub.L.119-21 regarding Medicaid community engagement requirements and expanded work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The committee amendments require the Department of Human Services to modify the existing, web-based HELPNJNOW portal to achieve various aspects of the bill regarding volunteer resources, rather than requiring the department to establish a new tool or database or modify a non-specified existing tool or database. The committee amendments replace all references to a newly established tool with references to the HELPNJNOW portal.

The committee amendments require the department to create, or modify an existing, web-based, mobile friendly resource that allows NJ FamilyCare and SNAP applicants and beneficiaries to submit to the appropriate eligibility determination agencies all information and documentation. As introduced, the bill directed the department to create, or modify an existing mobile application to achieve this goal.

The committee amendments require the Department of Human Services and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to establish a system by which volunteer hours and community service acquired by SNAP applicants and beneficiaries can be shared between the departments in order to collaboratively administer the New Jersey

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Program.

The committee amendments appropriate \$50,000 to the Department of Human Services and \$75,000 to the Office of Volunteerism to implement the bill's provisions and make changes to the bill's title and synopsis to reflect the appropriation.

The committee amendments revise the bill's effective date such that the provisions that apply to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are to take effect no later than October 1, 2026, and the provisions that apply to the NJ FamilyCare program are to take effect no later than October 1, 2027. Additionally, the Department of Human Services is authorized to take such anticipatory administrative action in advance of these effective dates as are necessary for implementation of the bill. As introduced, the bill became effective immediately.

MINORITY STATEMENT

By Assemblywoman Dawn Fantasia and Assemblyman John Azzariti, M.D.

This bill requires the Department of Human Services to promote volunteerism in compliance with eligibility requirements for NJ Family Care and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. While we support the bill's promotion of volunteerism and approved community service opportunities, we have concerns regarding one of the legislative declarations upon which the bill is based.

Specifically, the findings and declaration section of the bill states "The Legislature fears that these requirements under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," Pub. L. 119-21 (OBBBA) will inadvertently push thousands of NJ FamilyCare and SNAP beneficiaries out of these programs due to paperwork overload, administrative filing backups, confusion regarding compliance, and challenges in submitting documentation to demonstrate compliance."

We do not believe this finding should be accepted without scrutiny. New Jersey is ultimately responsible for administering both NJ FamilyCare and SNAP. While the federal government provides funding and establishes eligibility requirements, the State of New Jersey is responsible for determining eligibility, verifying compliance, processing applications, maintaining records, and administering these programs in accordance with federal law.

As written, the finding assumes that the requirements themselves are the problem. An equally important question is whether New Jersey is capable of administering these programs accurately and efficiently.

Federal eligibility requirements are not inherently unreasonable. Existing federal law has long required certain able-bodied adults who are not elderly, disabled, or caring for young children to work,

participate in training, or engage in approved community service activities as a condition of eligibility.

Recent history raises serious concerns regarding New Jersey's administration of public assistance programs. According to federal data, New Jersey's SNAP program recorded a payment error rate of 35.7 percent in Fiscal Year 2023, including approximately \$660 million in overpayments. Although the state reduced that error rate in Fiscal Year 2024, it still exceeded 14 percent.

These numbers do not reflect a one-time mistake. They reflect persistent and well-documented deficiencies in the administration of the program.

For consecutive years, New Jersey has demonstrated significant deficiencies in the administration of SNAP. While improvements have been made, the state's error rates remain concerning and raise legitimate questions about whether future compliance challenges are attributable to federal requirements or to New Jersey's continued difficulties administering the program accurately and efficiently.

It is therefore premature to assume that future enrollment losses, paperwork backlogs, compliance issues, or administrative delays are the result of federal policy rather than shortcomings in New Jersey's own administration of these programs.

The federal government should not be expected to indefinitely subsidize administrative errors, overpayments, or program mismanagement at the state level. New Jersey has an obligation to administer NJ FamilyCare and SNAP efficiently, accurately, and in compliance with federal law.

For these reasons, while we support the bill's promotion of volunteerism and approved community service opportunities, we have concerns regarding the finding and declaration as currently drafted and believe it warrants amendment.

Specifically, we do not believe the Legislature should presume that future enrollment losses, paperwork backlogs, compliance issues, or administrative difficulties are necessarily the result of federal requirements when New Jersey has demonstrated persistent and well-documented deficiencies in administering these programs.