

ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO
ASSEMBLY, No. 5040

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

The Assembly Community Development and Women's Affairs Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 5040.

As amended and reported, this bill establishes the Hope Card Program in New Jersey. Under the bill, a victim of domestic violence who obtains a final restraining order may request a Hope Card from the court at no cost. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is authorized to develop the Hope Card as either a laminated, durable, plastic, wallet-sized card or a secure electronic record accessible through a mobile device, website, application, or other technology as approved by AOC. A Hope Card must contain essential information about the restraining order, including the:

- Court of issuance;
- Date of issuance;
- Case number;
- Identifying information and characteristics of the defendant;
- Terms of the restraining order, including any firearms restrictions;
- Names of all persons protected by the restraining order.

Under the bill, a law enforcement officer presented with a Hope Card must verify the information with the State's domestic violence central registry as part of any domestic violence investigation. The bill provides that a person who is issued a Hope Card is exempt from the confidentiality restrictions that would otherwise apply to information from the domestic violence central registry. However, the bill requires any person who receives information contained on a Hope Card must take all reasonable measures to preserve confidentiality. The bill also provides that AOC must consult with the State Domestic Violence Working Group and other knowledgeable persons or organizations concerning the design of the card. The bill further requires the Attorney General and AOC to incorporate information on the Hope Card Program into their respective existing domestic violence training programs.

The bill additionally provides that theft, defacement, or alteration of a Hope Card by the defendant subject to the restraining order is deemed contempt of court in the fourth degree. A crime of the fourth degree is punishable by a term of imprisonment of up to 18 months, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

Finally, the bill provides for an annual appropriation to the Judiciary for the implementation of the program.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

1) permit a Hope Card to identify all protected persons covered by the order, including a protected child or children, and to permit a parent or guardian with custody of a protected child or children to request a Hope Card;

2) permit the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide an electronic or other digital format through which a protected party may access a Hope Card;

3) no longer require that a Hope Card be returned to the issuing court upon dissolution of a final restraining order;

4) require that the Administrative Office of the Courts to consult with the State Domestic Violence Working Group and other knowledgeable persons or organizations concerning the design of the Hope Card, instead of the Attorney General, the Advisory Council on Domestic Violence, and the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police;

5) require that, upon modification of a Hope Card, a person issued a Hope Card may request an updated Hope Card or electronic record;

6) clarify that the Attorney General is responsible for training law enforcement officers and the Administrative Director of the Courts is responsible for training judges and court personnel on the implementation of the program as part of their respective existing domestic violence training programs; and

7) make minor technical corrections.