

SENATE COMMUNITY AND URBAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 385

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 1, 2026

The Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 385.

As reported, this bill would establish a number of fire safety standards for light frame construction of new multiple dwellings, hotels, and rooming and boarding houses with more than two dwelling or sleeping units, and a fire warden requirement for all light frame construction.

Under the bill, covered residential buildings may only be newly constructed utilizing light frame construction in certain instances, as outlined in the bill.

In addition, for all new construction projects, this bill would require the owner or developer to hire a fire watch warden to provide monitoring of the construction project during non-working hours, or install comparable technology. A fire watch warden must be present from the time the construction project begins until the final sprinkler inspection is completed or a temporary certificate of occupancy is issued. In the event of a fire or other emergency, the fire watch warden must alert local first responders. The fire watch warden must also report fire safety issues to the Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Community Affairs, which may request that the local construction code official revoke construction permits for projects posing fire safety risks. The Division of Fire Safety may assess owners and developers of covered construction projects reasonable fees to cover the costs incurred by the division for carrying out its responsibilities under the bill.

The bill also directs the Commissioner of Community Affairs to promulgate rules and regulations to require that an identifying emblem be affixed to the front of each exterior entrance of structures with light frame or truss construction to clearly communicate that the structure in the affected area is combustible and known to the State to pose a fire hazard. Under current law, an identifying emblem is to be affixed to the front of a structure utilizing truss construction only.

Lastly, the bill directs the Commissioner of Community Affairs to adopt regulations to require that placards identifying the primary structural system of a structure be affixed adjacent to the fire alarm control panel and to an exterior wall within 10 feet of the main entrance to the structure.

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.