

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR
CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2981

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 5, 2026

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2981.

This bill implements certain measures to support nurses and the nursing workforce. Specifically, the bill establishes requirements for the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing (NJCCN) to develop new graduate transition-to-practice programs; revises the membership of the NJCCN's governing board; increases State funding for the NJCCN; requires the New Jersey Nursing Emotional Well-Being Institute (NJ-NEW) to establish a program of services and a peer support helpline to promote the mental health and emotional well-being of nurses and their families; and establishes annual survey requirements for nurses, homemaker-home health aides (HHAs) and certified nurse aides (CNAs), as well as for schools that offer nurse training programs and HHA and CNA training programs.

Graduate Nursing Transition-to-Practice Programs

The bill establishes a program through which facilities for acute care, long-term care, public health, ambulatory care, home care and hospice providers, veterans' memorial homes, and other qualifying facilities or providers may apply to receive financial, material and technical support from the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing ("NJCCN") to implement a transition-to-practice program for licensed practical nurses and registered professional nurses, or one of these professions. To manage the operations of the program, the bill appropriates \$500,000 to NJCCN.

The NJCCN is to: 1) establish and update, as necessary, requirements for a transition-to-practice program; and 2) establish criteria for eligibility of facilities and providers to participate in the program created in accordance with the bill. Requirements for a transition-to-practice program are to include, at a minimum: 1) a 12-month timeline for a transition-to-practice program; 2) a full-time schedule for program participants; 3) support for program participants by a preceptor or mentor; and 4) collection of data by the facility or provider to send to the NJCCN regarding the number of individuals who completed a transition-to-practice program with the facility or

provider and remained at the facility or with the provider after program completion for full-time employment.

To participate in the NJCCN program, facilities and providers are to file an application that includes information on: 1) the number of spots to be offered in the facility or provider's transition-to-practice program; 2) the type of facility or provider seeking approval; and 3) whether the facility or provider's transition-to-practice program is newly established or being updated. Approval of an application by the NJCCN will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis, with priority given to veterans' memorial homes, long-term care facilities, and home care providers. Upon approval of an application by the NJCCN, the New Jersey Board of Nursing will provide funding to the NJCCN to offer the financial, material, and technical support to the approved facility or provider, in an amount determined based on various criteria, including, but not limited to, the information submitted in the application on the number of spots in a transition-to-practice program, the type of facility, and if the transition-to-practice program is new or being updated. The bill directs that at no time is the New Jersey Board of Nursing to allocate an amount exceeding \$2 million annually to the NJCCN for the financial, material, and technical support to facilities and providers participating in the program created in the bill.

Finally, a biennial report currently required of the NJCCN to submit to the Governor and Legislature is to now include various data on the transition-to-practice programs established for licensed practical nurses and registered professional nurses.

New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing's Governing Board Membership

The bill updates and revises the membership of the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing's governing board to include: a member who is a school nurse representative recommended by the New Jersey State School Nurses Association, instead of a school nurse representative of acute care facilities recommended by the New Jersey Council of Teaching Hospitals; and a member who is a public health nurse representative recommended by the New Jersey Association of Public Health Nurse Administrators, instead of a public health nurse representative of practical nursing programs recommended by the Practical Nurses Educator's Council of New Jersey.

New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing Funding

The bill amends current law to provide that an amount equal to at least \$515,000 of the initial and renewal licensing fees charged by the New Jersey Board of Nursing for professional and practical nurses is dedicated to funding, and annually appropriated to, the NJCCN. Under current law, five percent of the initial and renewal licensing fees

charged by the board are dedicated to funding, and annually appropriated to, the NJCCN. The NJCCN will annually receive five percent, or \$515,000, whichever amount is greater.

Nurse Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health Support

The bill requires the New Jersey Nursing Emotional Well-Being Institute (NJ-NEW) in the NJCCN to establish a program of services designed to promote the mental health and emotional well-being of nurses, as well as to provide a nurse-to-nurse peer support helpline. Specifically, NJ-NEW will be required to establish a program of services designed to promote the mental health and well-being of nurses licensed in New Jersey and their families and prevent the psychological and physical sequelae of stress. At a minimum, the program will:

(1) encourage all health care facilities in the State that employ nurses to access the NJ-NEW Virtual Schwartz Rounds program;

(2) work to make Virtual Schwartz rounds available to all nurses in the State on at least a monthly basis;

(3) coordinate with nursing associations, mental health associations, and community organizations to facilitate a Statewide NJ-NEW well-being hub, which will comprise learning collaboratives that offer strategies to prevent work-related stress from causing physical and emotional symptoms, provide educational resources, and provide consultation services for health care organizations in New Jersey to promote emotional well-being for nurses and their families;

(4) provide stress first aid training or establish partnerships with stress first aid training providers to support health care organizations in promoting emotional well-being and resiliency for nurses and their families;

(5) establish an online repository of Statewide emotional well-being and mental health resources and referrals for nurses and their families; and

(6) establish any other evidence-based initiatives that meet the ongoing emotional well-being and mental health needs of nurses and their families. The bill appropriates from the General Fund to the Department of State such sums as are sufficient, as determined by the Secretary of State, for allocation to the NJ-NEW to support the operations of NJ-NEW and the initiatives undertaken by NJ-NEW pursuant to the bill.

Workforce and Training Program Survey Requirements

The bill codifies certain existing surveys for nurses and creates new surveys for homemaker-home health aides (HHAs) and certified nurse aides (CNAs), as well as for schools that offer nurse training programs and HHA and CNA training programs.

Specifically, the survey for nurses, HHAs, and CNAs will solicit information concerning: 1) the person's licensure or certification status; 2) the person's demographic information, including age, race, ethnicity, and gender; 3) the person's educational background; 4) the person's employment status; 5) the person's primary employment setting; 6) the type of position held by the person; 7) and any other information as may be required. Nurses will additionally be asked whether the nurse is licensed under the multistate Nurse Licensure Compact and whether, during the course of the prior year, the nurse provided professional services in other states under the compact. The survey is to be completed by the professional in connection with the professional's initial licensure or certification and in connection with the renewal of the professional's license or certification.

The survey for schools that offer training programs for nurses will include programs that offer a diploma, an associate's degree, a baccalaureate degree, or an advanced degree in nursing, as well as licensed practical nurse training programs.

The nurse training program survey and the surveys for HHA and CNA training programs will solicit the following information: 1) the number of applicants rejected by the school or program; 2) the total number of available slots at the school or program; 3) the total number of qualified candidates who applied to the school or program; 4) the total number of current enrollees in the school or program; 5) graduation rates from the school or program; 6) in the case of nursing schools, pass rates for program graduates for the National Council Licensure Examination; 7) demographic information concerning current students and faculty, including data concerning age, race, ethnicity, and gender; 8) faculty vacancy rates; 9) the total number of faculty employed; 10) the educational background of faculty members; and 11) such other information as may be required. The survey is to be completed by the school or training program no later than July 1 of each year.

The New Jersey Board of Nursing and the DOH will be required to develop and annually review the surveys required under the bill in collaboration with the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing (NJCCN).

The New Jersey Board of Nursing will ensure compliance with the nurse and HHA survey requirements and the DOH will ensure compliance with the CNAs and CNA training program survey requirements. A survey will not be deemed complete unless all survey questions are answered.

The New Jersey Board of Nursing will transmit de-identified nurse and HHA survey data to the NJCCN, which will analyze the data and produce an annual aggregate report. The NJCCN will additionally analyze and produce an annual aggregate report of nursing school and HHA training program survey data. The DOH will be required to analyze CNA and CNA training program survey data and produce an

annual aggregate report; however, the department will be authorized to contract with the NJCCN to analyze the data and produce the report, the costs of which will be offset by the department furnishing the NJCCN with five percent of CNA licensure fees collected for the current reporting period.

The reports of survey data for nurses, HHAs, schools that offer training programs for nurses, and HHA training programs will be made available on the Internet websites of the New Jersey Board of Nursing and the NJCCN. The CNA and CNA training program reports will be made available on the Internet websites of the DOH and the NJCCN.

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.