

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5314

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 218th LEGISLATURE

DATED: DECEMBER 11, 2019

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Requires DHS to study social isolation occurring in certain population groups.
- Type of Impact:** One-time increase in State expenditures, General Fund.
- Agencies Affected:** Department of Human Services.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Year 1</u>
State Cost Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that this bill will result in an indeterminate, one-time State expenditure increase for a Department of Human Services (DHS) survey assessing and reporting on the nature and prevalence of social isolation in vulnerable populations, as well as available resources for addressing social isolation among these populations.
- The cost of surveying, assessing, and reporting on the frequency of social isolation among New Jersey's vulnerable populations cannot be quantified with any certainty as: 1) the Commissioner of Human Services is given broad discretion to determine, beyond the four populations specified in the bill, any additional populations to study, thereby influencing the size and scope of the survey, and 2) the commissioner may utilize data already gathered by other State, county, and municipal agencies. To the extent that there are existing data at the State or local level that the DHS can utilize, State costs will be limited.
- The DHS may incur additional costs associated with researching and compiling information on available resources for combating social isolation for some relevant groups. For other vulnerable populations, such as senior citizens, this information is already compiled and readily accessible to DHS.

- Finally, the department will realize additional costs associated with analyzing the data collected for each population and producing a comprehensive report, which the DHS will submit to both the Governor and the Legislature, and will publish on the department's website.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the Commissioner of Human Services to assess and report on the nature and frequency of social isolation occurring in the State, and the resources that are available to combat social isolation. The assessment and report will be required to focus on, but need not be limited to, an analysis of social isolation affecting the following vulnerable populations: 1) individuals who are 65 years of age or older; 2) individuals with disabilities, with this term interpreted expansively; 3) individuals with mental illness; and 4) other vulnerable populations, as deemed by the commissioner to be appropriate, including active duty military and military veterans.

In conducting the social isolation assessment, the commissioner will be required to review available data and research materials on social isolation; review the practices of other states and jurisdictions in this area; consult with appropriate professionals, organizations, and agencies throughout the State that provide social or daily living assistance to members of vulnerable populations; consult with members of vulnerable populations and their family members and caregivers who are currently seeking treatment or care for social isolation; consult with educational institutions and other educational or public interest organizations in the State that are actively involved in the study or research of matters related to social isolation; and consult with State, county, and municipal departments and agencies.

The report prepared under the bill is to be filed with the Governor and the Legislature, and is also to be posted on the DHS website. The provisions of the bill will expire upon submission of the report.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS estimates that this bill will result in an indeterminate, one-time State expenditure increase for a DHS survey assessing and reporting on the nature and prevalence of social isolation in vulnerable populations, as well as available resources for addressing social isolation among these populations. The OLS cannot quantify the costs that the State will incur to develop an assessment tool to gauge social isolation, survey vulnerable populations, analyze the resulting data, and produce a comprehensive report on social isolation.

Assuming that the DHS will utilize, to the extent possible, data collected by other State, county, and municipal agencies, data-gathering costs will be minimized. For vulnerable groups of citizens for which there are no existing data on social isolation, OLS presumes that the DHS will utilize or adapt assessment tools developed by New Jersey universities, professional associations, veterans' groups, public interest organizations, or other states. Additionally, the task of locating and assessing members of certain vulnerable populations may prove challenging; for example, it may

be somewhat difficult for DHS staff to survey undocumented immigrants about social isolation, because some undocumented individuals may be reluctant to interact with government employees. Therefore, the DHS may realize higher costs associated with gathering information from some at-risk populations, compared with other populations.

For some of the surveyed populations, the DHS will incur additional costs to research and compile information on available resources to help combat social isolation. For other vulnerable populations, such as senior citizens, this resource information is already compiled and readily accessible to the DHS. The department will also incur administrative costs to analyze the data for each population group surveyed, and integrate these data into a comprehensive report on social isolation.

Since the bill permits the DHS to consult with and, whenever possible, utilize existing data collected by other State, county or municipal agencies, the OLS assumes that the department will fulfill the requirements of the bill with existing employees. Therefore, the department will not incur additional personnel costs in implementing the provisions of this legislation.

Section: Human Services

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).