ASSEMBLY HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 870

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 10, 2020

The Assembly Human Services Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 870.

This bill would require the Director of the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the Department of Human Services, within six months after the bill's enactment, to evaluate and report on the interactions that are occurring between law enforcement and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The evaluation would include a review of: 1) the existing laws, rules, regulations, policies, procedures, practices, and protocols that govern interactions between law enforcement and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; 2) the nature and extent of training in sign language that is available to, or mandated for, law enforcement officers in the State; 3) the nature and extent of training in de-escalation and crisis management that is available to, or mandated for, law enforcement in the State, particularly in regard to the de-escalation of situations involving individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; 4) the availability and responsiveness of qualified interpreters in law enforcement agencies and offices and in the field; 5) the treatment received by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing while in the custody of law enforcement; 6) the nature, extent, and manner of resolution of any civil, criminal, or administrative complaints that have been filed by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, or by their family members on their behalf, in relation to the individuals' interactions with law enforcement; and 7) any other subject matters or data that may be deemed by the director to be relevant.

The bill would authorize the director, when conducting the evaluation, to consult with, and request appropriate data and information from, the Department of Law and Public Safety, any division thereof, or any State or local law enforcement agency or office, as may be deemed to be necessary.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the director will be required to prepare a written report that: 1) describes the current nature of interactions occurring between law enforcement and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; 2) identifies existing laws, rules, regulations, policies, procedures, practices, and protocols that govern interactions between law enforcement and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; 3) highlights specific areas where

interactions between law enforcement and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can or should be improved; and 4) provides recommendations for executive, legislative, and administrative actions to be undertaken, or for policies, procedures, practices, or protocols to be implemented, by the Governor, by the Legislature, by the Department of Law and Public Safety, and by individual law enforcement agencies and offices throughout the State, as may be necessary to improve law enforcement officers' responsiveness to, ability to communicate with, and overall treatment of, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The report would be submitted to the Governor and Legislature, distributed to the Department of Law and Public Safety and every law enforcement agency or office in the State, and published on the Internet website of the Department of Human Services.

The bill would expire 30 days after the distribution and publication of the report.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.