

ASSEMBLY, No. 906

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman DIANNE C. GOVE

District 9 (Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean)

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District 9 (Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean)

Assemblywoman BETTYLOU DECROCE

District 26 (Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes "Seniors Helping Seniors Who are Blind or Visually Impaired Demonstration Program" in DHS; appropriates \$360,000.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ACT** establishing a "Seniors Helping Seniors Who are Blind or
2 Visually Impaired Demonstration Program" and making an
3 appropriation.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*
7

8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. New Jersey's senior citizen population continues to grow; as
10 of July 1, 2006, almost 13%, or 1,127,742 persons, of a total
11 population of 8,724,560 were 65 years of age or older.

12 b. The county in the State with the largest percentage of senior
13 citizens is Ocean County, where almost one-quarter of its residents
14 are 65 years of age or older, many of whom are blind or visually
15 impaired.

16 c. As people continue to live longer lives, they will experience
17 more chronic illnesses, which in many instances will result in
18 blindness or visual impairments.
19

20 2. There is established a three-year "Seniors Helping Seniors
21 Who are Blind or Visually Impaired Demonstration Program" in the
22 Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired in the Department
23 of Human Services.

24 The program shall: coordinate existing services such as low
25 vision services, orientation and mobility, eye health nursing,
26 rehabilitation teaching, social work and psychological services,
27 recreation and program transportation, to make them readily
28 available to senior citizens with vision problems; establish a
29 network of senior citizen volunteers and paid assistants and provide
30 them with appropriate training so they can assist in the provision of
31 rehabilitation assistance and other necessary services to senior
32 citizens who are experiencing vision problems; and establish a
33 public awareness and education program for senior citizens to
34 inform them of the availability of services. The program shall be
35 established in Ocean County and Cape May County.
36

37 3. The Executive Director of the Commission for the Blind and
38 Visually Impaired shall develop the demonstration program, which
39 shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

40 a. Assessment of the current need and availability of services
41 for blind and visually impaired senior citizens in Ocean County and
42 Cape May County;

43 b. Coordination of existing services and resources in the
44 counties;

45 c. Recruitment and training of senior citizen volunteers and paid
46 assistants to provide appropriate assistance to persons in need of
47 services;

1 d. Provision of services to blind and visually impaired senior
2 citizens in the counties; and

3 e. Establishment of a public awareness and education program to
4 inform senior citizens of the availability of services.
5

6 4. The executive director shall apply for and accept any grant of
7 money from the federal government, private foundations or other
8 sources, which may be available for the demonstration program and
9 for volunteer training.
10

11 5. Within six months of the expiration of this act, the executive
12 director shall report to the Governor and the Legislature on the
13 effectiveness of the program and present recommendations for
14 expanding the program Statewide, as appropriate.
15

16 6. In accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
17 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the executive director shall
18 promulgate rules and regulations necessary to effectuate the purposes
19 of this act.
20

21 7. There is appropriated \$360,000 to the Commission for the
22 Blind and the Visually Impaired in the Department of Human
23 Services in Fiscal Year 2008 from the General Fund, \$300,000
24 allocated to Ocean County and \$60,000 allocated to Cape May
25 County, to effectuate the purposes of this act. In Fiscal Years 2009
26 and 2010, \$360,000 shall be appropriated each year, \$300,000
27 allocated to Ocean County and \$60,000 allocated to Cape May
28 County, to effectuate the purposes of this act.
29

30 8. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire three
31 years after enactment.
32
33

34 STATEMENT

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36 This bill establishes a three-year "Seniors Helping Seniors Who are
37 Blind or Visually Impaired Demonstration Program" in the
38 Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired in the Department of
39 Human Services.

40 The program would be located in Ocean County and Cape May
41 County, and would:

42 1. coordinate existing services such as low vision services,
43 orientation and mobility, eye health nursing, rehabilitation teaching,
44 social work and psychological services, recreation and program
45 transportation, to make them readily available to senior citizens with
46 vision problems;

1 2. establish a network of senior citizen volunteers and paid
2 assistants and provide them with appropriate training so they can
3 assist in the provision of rehabilitation assistance and other necessary
4 services to senior citizens experiencing vision problems; and

5 3. establish a public awareness and education program for senior
6 citizens to inform them of the availability of services.

7 The Executive Director of the Commission for the Blind and
8 Visually Impaired would develop the demonstration program, which
9 is to include, but not be limited to, the following:

10 (1) Assessment of the current need and availability of services for
11 blind and visually impaired senior citizens in Ocean County and Cape
12 May County;

13 (2) Coordination of existing services and resources in the
14 counties;

15 (3) Recruitment and training of senior citizen volunteers and paid
16 assistants to provide appropriate assistance to persons in need of
17 services;

18 (4) Provision of services to blind and visually impaired senior
19 citizens in the counties; and

20 (5) Establishment of a public awareness and education program to
21 inform senior citizens of the availability of services.

22 Within six months of the expiration of this bill, the executive
23 director shall report to the Governor and the Legislature on the
24 effectiveness of the program and present recommendations for
25 expanding the program Statewide, as appropriate.