

ASSEMBLY, No. 2569

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman WAYNE P. DEANGELO

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Requires DCA to verify that low-income home energy assistance benefits are not awarded to deceased individuals.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT requiring vital statistics review for low-income home
2 energy assistance benefits and supplementing chapter 27D of
3 Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

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

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8 1. a. The Department of Community Affairs shall verify that
9 an applicant for benefits under the federal Low Income Home
10 Energy Assistance Program, established by 42 U.S.C. s.8621 et
11 seq., is not deceased both prior to awarding the applicant benefits
12 under that program and periodically after an applicant has been
13 approved to receive those benefits, using appropriate data supplied
14 by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics in the Department of
15 Health.

16 b. The Commissioner of Community Affairs, in consultation
17 with the State Registrar of Vital Statistics, shall promulgate rules
18 and regulations, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
19 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), in order to effectuate the
20 provisions of this section.

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22 2. This act shall take effect on the first day of the third month
23 next following enactment, except the commissioner may take any
24 anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall be necessary
25 for the implementation of this act.

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STATEMENT

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30 This bill would require the Department of Community Affairs
31 (DCA) to verify that an applicant is not deceased prior to awarding
32 the applicant Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
33 (LIHEAP) benefits, and on a periodic basis after awarding these
34 benefits. The bill requires DCA to cross-check applicants with vital
35 statistics data held by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics in the
36 Department of Health before and after awarding LIHEAP benefits.

37 LIHEAP is a federally funded program that allows the State to
38 provide assistance to help low-income residents cover home energy
39 costs. On October 12, 2016, the Office of the State Comptroller
40 released an investigative report on LIHEAP titled "Administration
41 of New Jersey's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program."
42 According to the report, DCA's failure to cross-check applicants
43 with death records may lead to the inappropriate award of benefits.
44 This bill establishes in law the State Comptroller's recommendation
45 that DCA conduct adequate vital statistics cross-checks to ensure
46 that LIHEAP benefits are not awarded to deceased individuals.