ASSEMBLY, No. 2880

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 20, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman PARKER SPACE
District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)
Assemblyman HAROLD "HAL" J. WIRTHS
District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

SYNOPSIS

Repeals requirement for general hospitals and State psychiatric hospitals to hold annual public meetings.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/24/2020)

AN ACT concerning general hospitals and State psychiatric hospitals and repealing P.L.2008, c.59.

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

1. P.L.2008, c.59 (C.26:2H-12.50 et seq. and C.30:4-3.22) is repealed.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill repeals the State law that requires certain health care facilities to hold annual public meetings.

Specifically, the bill repeals the requirements, set forth in P.L.2008, c.59, that a licensed general hospital or State psychiatric hospital conduct, at least annually, a public meeting to discuss issues relating to the operation of the hospital and concerns of the community with respect to the delivery of services at the hospital, and that notice of the annual public meeting be posted on the Department of Health (DOH) Internet website.

According to information supplied by the New Jersey Hospital Association, records made available by a representative sample of general hospitals in the State indicate that the annual public meetings conducted during the period from 2009 through 2012, pursuant to P.L.2008, c.59, have been sparsely attended in spite of the efforts made by hospitals, as required in the law, to provide public notice of these meetings in a conspicuous public location in each hospital, in newspapers, on hospital websites, and on the DOH website.

The purpose of this bill is to relieve general hospitals and State psychiatric hospitals of the additional administrative burden and expense imposed on them by P.L.2008, c.59. The requirements of that law are not meeting any demonstrated need for information on the part of the general public in view of the lack of public attendance at these meetings and the availability of alternative means of providing information to the public (already being utilized by hospitals) in the form of: written materials that hospitals mail to residents in their respective service areas on a continuing basis throughout the year; annual reports issued by hospitals; and the growing use of social media by hospitals. The public interest is not served when these facilities are forced to engage in a labor-intensive effort and incur additional costs (for advertising, refreshments, use of facilities, and staff overtime), which in many cases exceed $2,000, to plan for, prepare, and conduct meetings at which there is no significant attendance from members of the community.