ASSEMBLY HOMELAND SECURITY AND STATE PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2913

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 19, 2020

The Assembly Homeland Security and State Preparedness Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2913.

As reported by the committee, Assembly Bill No. 2913 permits members of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) to perform traffic duties under certain circumstances.

Under the provisions of this bill, a volunteer CERT may appoint certain members to perform traffic duties during times of emergency or disaster for a term of up to five years. Prior to performing any duties, the appointed member is required to qualify by: 1) passing a physical examination documenting the member's ability to stand and direct traffic for extended periods of time; 2) successfully completing a basic training course formulated or approved by the New Jersey Police Training Commission; and 3) taking and subscribing an oath that the member will justly, impartially, and faithfully discharge the member's duties.

The bill provides that after appointment, a qualified member is eligible to perform duties as a CERT traffic officer and may act anywhere in the county in which the officer is appointed or any county where the officer is called upon to act.

In addition, under the bill, the duties of a CERT traffic officer are to perform traffic duties at the request of a law enforcement agency during times of emergency or disaster: 1) on any roadway or intersection until the arrival of a duly authorized law enforcement officer; or 2) at any public event where CERT traffic officer services have been requested to protect the public, subject to the approval of and supervision by the chief law enforcement officer of the municipality in which the public event takes place or the Superintendent of State Police if the municipality does not have a police department.

Under the bill, Community Emergency Response Team traffic officers acting in good faith and within the confines of the officer's training are not to be liable in any civil action to respond in damages as a result of any acts of commission or omission arising out of and in the course of performing traffic duties pursuant to the bill.

Finally, the bill defines CERT as a group of volunteers working under the authority of the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management who are trained to respond to emergency situations.