

ASSEMBLY HOUSING COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3957

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: AUGUST 13, 2020

The Assembly Housing Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 3957.

As amended, this bill makes a FY 2020 supplemental Grants-in-Aid appropriation of \$5,000,000 to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to the NJSHARES - S.M.A.R.T. Program to fund financial assistance grants to New Jersey residents who suffered financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill provides that the \$5 million would be appropriated from the Universal Service Fund for utility payment assistance. The bill directs the commissioner to design and establish program criteria and guidelines consistent with the bill in order to award grants to eligible homeowners and tenants in an expeditious manner so to enable them to comply with their utilities obligations.

The bill directs the Commissioner of Community Affairs to award grants to homeowners and to residential tenants who suffered financial loss during the declaration of a Public Health Emergency and of a State of Emergency due to the coronavirus disease 2019. To be eligible for a grant under this program a homeowner or tenant may not be eligible for, or a recipient of funding from, private insurance or from any other available funding opportunity.

The bill authorizes the commissioner to implement this program through the award of contracts, or through the delegation of its authority to award grants, to private nonprofit organizations, public agencies, or both.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

These committee amendments would:

- reduce the appropriation authorized by the bill from \$10,000,000 to \$5,000,000;
- remove the Affordable Housing Trust Fund as a source of funding for this appropriation;
- provide that the funding would only be directed to utility obligation support, and not for the support of rent and mortgage payments; and
- make a technical amendment.

As reported, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2362, as amended and reported by the committee.