ASSEMBLY, No. 4043

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 7, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman JAMES J. KENNEDY
District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)
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District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)
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District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program in DHS.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/7/2020)

AN ACT establishing the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program.

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

1. a. There is hereby established in the Department of Human Services the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program. The goal of the program shall be to award one-time grants to certain municipalities in order to provide residents, who have been financially affected by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, with transitional assistance. As used in this act, "transitional assistance" means any form of support, monetary or otherwise, provided to eligible low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency.

In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this program, a municipality shall: (1) have a population of 50,000 or less, as determined by the most recent federal decennial census; and (2) designate an existing local assistance board, social services agency, board of health, COVID-19 relief fund, or some other entity approved by the Commissioner of Human Services, to administer the distribution of grant funds to residents, provided that if a municipality does not deem an existing entity appropriate for this task, the municipality may establish an entity for this purpose within 60 days of the effective date of this act.

Municipalities shall apply for a grant in a method, manner, and time frame determined by the Commissioner of Human Services, provided that all grant funds shall be awarded to municipalities no later than six months following the effective date of this act. Municipalities may retain counsel for the purpose of assisting in the application and administration of the grant program. The Commissioner of Human Services shall award all eligible municipalities a grant award equal to $5,000 for every 7,500 residents of the municipality, as determined by the most recent federal decennial census, and within the limits of available funds. If eligible grant awards exceed the available funds, the commissioner shall adjust this formula in such a manner that will result in an equitable distribution among the eligible municipalities based upon each municipality's population.

Upon receipt of a grant award, a municipality's designated entity shall immediately commence accepting and evaluating applications for transitional assistance submitted by residents. All applications shall be submitted using a universal form designed for the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program by the Commissioner of Human Services and made available in a digital format on the Department of Human Services' website. The form shall include restrictions on the receipt of assistance, as determined

by the Commissioner, such as, but not limited to, eligibility criteria and the amount of time an individual can receive assistance. The designated entity shall distribute transitional assistance benefits within 30 days of determining an applicant's eligibility, and shall continue to accept and evaluate applications until all grant funds are expended.

b. The Office of the State Comptroller shall conduct an audit of the distribution of transitional assistance by each designated municipal entity provided a grant award under this act, and submit the audit to the Commissioner of Human Services, the Governor, and the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), within 18 months of the effective date of this act.

2. There is appropriated $3,500,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services to fulfill the provisions of this act.

3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon the submission of the audit to the Commissioner of Human Services, Governor, and Legislature by the Office of the State Comptroller pursuant to subsection b. of section 1 of this act.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program in the Department of Human Services. The goal of the program is to award one-time grants to certain municipalities in order to provide residents, who have been financially affected by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, with transitional assistance. As used in the bill, "transitional assistance" means any form of support, monetary or otherwise, provided to eligible low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency.

In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this program, a municipality is required to: (1) have a population of 50,000 or less, as determined by the most recent federal decennial census; and (2) designate an existing local assistance board, social services agency, board of health, COVID-19 relief fund, or some other entity approved by the Commissioner of Human Services, to administer the distribution of grant funds to residents, provided that if a municipality does not deem an existing entity appropriate for this task, the municipality may establish an entity for this purpose within 60 days of the effective date of the bill.

Municipalities are to apply for a grant in a method, manner, and time frame determined by the Commissioner of Human Services, provided that all grant funds are to be awarded no later than six

months following the effective date of this act. The bill also expressly permits municipalities to retain counsel for the purpose of assisting in the application and administration of the grant program.

The Commissioner of Human Services is to award all eligible municipalities a grant award equal to $5,000 for every 7,500 residents of the municipality, within the limits of available funds. Specifically, the bill appropriations $3.5 million from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services to fulfill the provisions of the bill. If eligible grant awards exceed the available funds, the commissioner is to adjust this formula in such a manner that will result in an equitable distribution among the eligible municipalities based upon each municipality's population.

Upon receipt of a grant award, a municipality's designated entity is required to immediately commence accepting and evaluating applications for transitional assistance submitted by residents. All applications are to be submitted using a universal form designed for the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program by the Commissioner of Human Services and made available in a digital format on the Department of Human Services' website. The form is required to include restrictions on the receipt of assistance, as determined by the Commissioner, such as, but not limited to, eligibility criteria and the amount of time an individual can receive payments. The designated entity is to distribute transitional assistance benefits within 30 days of determining an applicant's eligibility, and shall continue to accept and evaluate applications until all grant funds are expended.

Under the bill, the Office of the State Comptroller is directed to conduct an audit of the distribution of transitional assistance by a designated municipal entity provided a COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant, and submit the audit to the Commissioner of Human Services, the Governor, and the Legislature within 18 months of the effective date of this bill. The bill is to take effect immediately and expire upon the submission of this audit.