

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 4131

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 9, 2020

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No.4131.

As amended by the committee, this bill requires the Commissioner of Health to issue protocols for the sanitization of each hotel in the State.

As defined in the bill: “front desk” means the physical location in a hotel where a guest may check-in to or reserve a room; “guest room” means a private room made available by a hotel for occupancy by a guest, including those comprised of several interconnected rooms, such as a bathroom, living room, or multiple bedrooms, in the case of a suite; “guest touch-point” means any surface in a public space in hotel that is regularly touched by a hotel or motel guest, including, but is not limited to, doorknobs, door handles, counters, desks, tables, chairs, sofas, and electronics; “occupied guest room” means that a guest is currently checked in to a guest room regardless of whether the guest is physically present in the room; and “public space” means any space, excluding a guest room, accessible to a guest within a hotel including, but are not limited to, the lobby, including a lobby bathroom, a dining area, a hallway, an elevator, and a bathroom.

Specifically, the protocols would include, but not be limited to, directives requiring hotels to: maintain continuous 24 hour, seven day a week coverage of a front desk by at least one employee, and by at least one additional employee per every 200 guest rooms; train a front desk employee to respond to a guests’ inquiry related to health and safety, including but not limited to, the location of hospitals in the vicinity of the hotel, emergency telephone numbers, and options for seeking treatment or testing for virus diseases during a public health crisis; ensure that every guest virus diseases during a public health crisis; ensure that every guest room is cleaned and sanitized and provided with an adequate supply of clean towels, sheets, and pillowcases prior to occupancy by a new guest; ensure that every occupied guest room is cleaned and sanitized every day, and that the room is provided with an adequate supply of clean towels, sheets, and pillowcases and that the towels, sheets, and pillowcases that are changed no less frequently than once every day; ensure that all public spaces are cleaned and sanitized at least once every day,

and that all guest touch-points are cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout each day; provide their employees with anti-microbial cleaning products certified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency that are approved for use against COVID-19, other coronaviruses, influenza viruses, or other viral diseases and will be used when cleaning and sanitizing each guest room, guest touch-point, and public space; and train its employees on the proper use of anti-microbial cleaning products and on proper cleaning protocols that maximize the sanitary condition of each guest room, guest touch-point, and public space.

The Bureau of Housing Inspection in the Department of Community Affairs would distribute the guidelines developed by the Department of Health and inspect each hotel in the State for the purpose of determining the extent to which each hotel complies with the provisions of bill.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill:

to clarify that hotels, instead of hotel staff, would be required to maintain certain staffing levels and provide for sanitization procedures for guest rooms, guest touch-points, and public spaces;

to clarify that hotels must maintain continuous 24 hour, seven day a week coverage of a front desk by at least one front desk employee, and at least one additional employees per every 200 guest rooms; and

to change the effective date of the bill to 14 days following enactment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that the Department of Health (DOH) may incur indeterminate one-time costs to issue protocols for the sanitation of hotels, as directed under the bill. However, such tasks are within the purview of the department's work and it is likely that existing staff can be utilized to fulfill these provisions of the bill, thereby minimizing or eliminating any costs.

The OLS also concludes that the Bureau of Housing Inspection in the Department of Community Affairs may incur indeterminate annual expenses to inspect each hotel in the State for compliance with the newly established DOH protocols, to the extent that such protocols expand upon the existing responsibilities of the Bureau. The OLS, however, cannot predict the final scope of the DOH protocols and the frequency with which the Bureau will be required to inspect for those protocols and, therefore, the cost of the bill to the Bureau.