

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4484

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

DATED: OCTOBER 26, 2020

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Requires State Long-Term Care Ombudsman to establish long-term care advocacy and educational training program.
- Type of Impact:** Increase in annual State expenditures.
- Agencies Affected:** New Jersey Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman; Department of Health.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Annual</u>
State Cost Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that this bill will result in an indeterminate annual increase in expenditures to be incurred by the New Jersey Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman (NJLTCO) to establish and implement a long-term care training program.
- One-time costs associated with developing the program will likely be minimal due to the overlap of the training content with the mission of the NJLTCO to serve as an independent advocate for older individuals receiving long-term care, as well as the availability of existing resources to assist in establishing the program. Annual costs associated with the program are indeterminate as the bill allows for the method of implementation to be determined by the ombudsman, in consultation with the Department of Health.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the ombudsman to establish, in consultation with the Department of Health, an annual long-term care training program. At a minimum, the program is to address the following subjects: the rights of residents of long-term care facilities; fostering choice and independence among residents of long-term care facilities; identifying and reporting abuse, neglect, or exploitation of residents of long-term care facilities; long-term care facility ownership; updates on State and federal guidelines, laws, and regulations that pertain to long-term care facilities; and

issues, trends, and policies that impact the rights of long-term care residents. The annual training program is to be completed by the ombudsman's investigative and advocacy staff, the ombudsman's volunteer advocates, and Department of Health long-term care facility surveyors, inspectors, and complaint investigators. Subject to the availability of staff and funding, the training program is to be offered to residents of long-term care facilities, those residents' family members, advocacy organizations, government agencies, and long-term care facility employees. To develop and implement the training program, the ombudsman may contract or consult with a non-profit organization that possesses expertise on the rights of residents in long-term care settings.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS estimates that this bill will result in an indeterminate annual increase in State expenditures to be incurred by the NJLTCO to establish and implement a long-term care training program.

One-time costs associated with developing the program will likely be minimal due to the overlap of the training content with the mission of the NJLTCO to serve as an independent advocate for older individuals receiving long-term care, as well as the availability of existing resources, such as: the 32-hour training program and certification exam utilized by the NJLTCO to train applicants for the office's Volunteer Advocate Program; the training modules offered by the National Long-term Care Ombudsman Resource Center, which provides support, technical assistance and training to state and local long-term care ombudsman programs; and connections with other ombudsman programs via professional organizations such as the National Association of Local Long-term Care Ombudsman and the National Association of State Ombudsman Programs. The OLS further assumes that any costs to develop the training program will be limited to a one-time expenditure, with the periodic review of the curriculum absorbed into the NJLTCO's existing budget.

Annual costs associated with the program are indeterminate as the bill allows for the method of implementation to be determined by the ombudsman, in consultation with the Department of Health. For example, to the extent that the training program is provided in-person, the costs of the program will be higher, as existing staff or possibly new staff will be needed to lead the training. The OLS notes that cost of in-person implementation will increase in direct relation to how many optional populations (i.e. residents of long-term care facilities, those residents' family members, advocacy organizations, government agencies, and long-term care facility employees) are offered the training, as permitted under the bill. While the OLS assumes a digital platform for the training would significantly minimize staff costs, one-time expenses would still be incurred by the office to design the training tool.

For reference, the State appropriated \$2.1 million from the General Fund to the NJLTCO for the 12-month period from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, a \$300,000 increase from the FY 2020 level of \$1.8 million. Federal funding remained stable at \$1.1 million over this same period.

Section: Human Services

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).