

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4651

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

DATED: JANUARY 10, 2022

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Requires MVC to issue special identification documents to persons diagnosed with autism upon request.
- Type of Impact:** Annual State cost increases.
- Agencies Affected:** Motor Vehicle Commission; Office of Information Technology; Department of Law and Public Safety; Department of Human Services

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

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

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that the bill will result in indeterminate initial development costs and ongoing administrative expenditures to the State for the development and production of the driver’s license and non-driver identification card and for the distribution to law enforcement agencies statewide of recommended guidance for effectively communicating with a person with an autism spectrum disorder. The magnitude of any State cost increase will depend on implementation decisions made by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC), which the OLS is unable to anticipate.
- It is not known what type of changes to the driver’s license and non-driver identification card will be made or the cost to make those changes; however, programming and design changes of this type can largely be completed with the assistance of the Office of Information Technology (OIT), and the change orders are expected to be comparable to other change orders that the MVC has issued to its vendors in the past for license alterations.
- The bill also directs the MVC to develop and distribute written guidance in how to communicate effectively with persons diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder to each police department in the State. The MVC will be required to dedicate staff time and resources of an unknown quantity to the development of the written guidance.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the MVC, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, the Division of State Police, and at least one organization that advocates on behalf of persons who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, to design a special driver's license and non-driver identification card bearing a digital imprint that may be utilized by a person who has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. The special driver's license or non-driver identification card is to be issued to any eligible person upon application. No additional fee is to be charged for the driver's license or non-driver identification card.

The bill also requires that the commission establish the documentation required to be produced by a person who has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, or by the parent, guardian, or caregiver of the person, in order to receive a special driver's license or non-driver identification card.

The bill requires the MVC to provide written guidance to assist law enforcement officers in effectively communicating with a person who has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. The commission is required to distribute the written guidance to each police department in the State.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS finds that the bill will result in indeterminate initial development costs and ongoing administrative expenditures to the State for the development and production of the driver's licenses and non-driver identification cards and for the distribution to law enforcement agencies statewide of recommended guidance for effectively communicating with a person with an autism spectrum disorder. The chief administrator will be responsible for determining how a licensee may indicate that a person is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, so long as the qualified licenses and cards bear a digital imprint indicating the person's status. Possible mechanisms to achieve this could include the inclusion of a notation or endorsement on the license or the redesign of the license.

When similar legislation was passed allowing for persons who are insulin-dependent diabetics to request a designation on their licenses, the MVC achieved this by coding for a new number to be printed on qualified licenses under the "restrictions" area that already exists on New Jersey driver's licenses. Employing a similar strategy to comply with the stipulations of this bill would be more cost-effective than redesigning the license. The MVC has existing staff capable of such work but the changes will consume MVC staff hours and resources. Once the manner of designation is decided, it will be necessary to work with the current driver's license vendor to redesign the software that produces driver's licenses to incorporate those changes. The MVC periodically makes change orders of this type, but the OLS does not have access to the cost or nature of these change orders, so it is not possible to derive an estimate from a comparable change order. The manner of designation selected by the chief administrator will have an impact on the degree of the increase in State costs. Any related programming necessary to make changes to existing license printing formats can be conducted by OIT but would likely require an eventual

change order be filed with the driver's license vendor. Such a change order would be similar in scope to other orders that the MVC has made.

The MVC will also be required to dedicate an unknown quantity of staff time and resources to developing and distributing written guidance to assist law enforcement officers in their interactions with persons diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. The bill does not specify how the written guidelines are to be distributed. Electronic distribution would save on printing and mailing costs.

Section: Authorities, Utilities, Transportation and Communications

*Analyst: Jeffrey Layden
Assistant Research Analyst*

*Approved: Thomas Koenig
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer*

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.).