ASSEMBLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5502

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 12, 2021

The Assembly Women and Children Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 5502.

As amended by the committee, this bill requires the Commissioner of Community Affairs, in consultation with the Attorney General, to establish a program to provide grants to organizations which offer or seek to offer mentoring services programs. Preference is to be given to those organizations which offer or seek to offer programs that provide youth with alternatives to membership in or association with criminal street gangs.

An organization which elects to participate in the grant program is to submit an application to the commissioner in a form and manner prescribed by the commissioner. The application is to outline: the applicant's proposal to offer existing or develop new mentoring services programs; sample activities and social service offerings; existing funds available to the applicant for providing mentoring services; and the amount of the applicant's grant request.

The bill stipulates that based upon the application, and subject to the availability of funds, the commissioner is to award a grant to each approved grant applicant to offer existing or develop new mentoring programs.

The commissioner, to the extent possible, is to equitably distribute grant awards to successful applicants in the northern, central, and southern regions of the State, and to seek a cross section of approved grant applicants from urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Each organization awarded a grant to offer existing or develop new mentoring services programs is required to submit to the commissioner, on an annual basis, a report on the status of the programs. The report is to include, but not be limited to: information on the number of the participants in the program; program hours of operation; regular program activities and social service offerings; and the number and qualifications of program staff, including volunteers. These reports would be used by the commissioner to evaluate future grant applications.

As amended, the bill defines "mentoring services programs" as programs administered by a duly incorporated non-profit organization to provide advice, support, opinion, or instruction to persons 21 years

of age or younger in an effort to direct that person's judgment or conduct in a positive manner.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill to clarify that the grant program established in the bill is to provide grants to organizations which offer or seek to offer mentoring services programs.

The amendments stipulate that under the provisions of the grant program, preference is to be given to those organizations which offer or seek to offer programs that provide youth with alternatives to membership in or association with criminal street gangs.

The committee amendments specify that the application for the grant program is to outline the existing funds available to the applicant for providing mentoring services.

The amendments require that the annual report submitted by organizations awarded grants is to include information on social service offerings as well as information on regular program activities.

The committee amended the bill to replace the term "mentoring services" with the term "mentoring services programs," and define "mentoring services programs" as programs administered by a duly incorporated non-profit organization to provide advice, support, opinion, or instruction to persons 21 years of age or younger in an effort to direct that person's judgment or conduct in a positive manner.

The committee amendments make technical corrections that improve the clarity of the bill's provisions and correct minor syntax and grammatical errors.