

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5696

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 18, 2021

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5696.

This bill authorizes county corrections officers to take a modified training course to transition into a position as a detective or investigator in the county prosecutor's office, or as a county or municipal police officer.

Current law authorizes a county corrections officer to transition to a position as a county sheriff's officer by completing a supplemental course known as the modified basic training course for county corrections officers. This abbreviated training course, often referred to as the "GAP program," allows an eligible county corrections officer to be certified as a county sheriff's officer without having to take the entire basic training course required of other candidates for county sheriff's officer positions. Successful completion of the GAP program makes the county corrections officer eligible for a lateral transfer to the county sheriff's office in the county where the officer serves. The officer is not to be denied transfer to an available position without cause.

To be eligible for the GAP program under current law, a county corrections officer is required to have: 1) previously completed a Police Training Commission (PTC) basic training course; 2) been designated by the county sheriff as eligible to transition into the position of county sheriff's officer based on the officer's law enforcement examination test score and seniority; 3) served in the county correction's officer title for a minimum of 36 months in the facility under the jurisdiction of the county sheriff; and 4) passed a criminal history record background check.

This bill requires the PTC to expand the GAP program to similarly authorize county corrections officers to transition into positions as detectives or investigators in the county prosecutor's office, or county or municipal police officers. The PTC has 30 days to make the necessary changes to the GAP program to implement provisions of the bill.

Under the bill, the chief executive officer of the county or municipality is responsible for designating whether a county corrections officer is eligible to transition to a position as a detective or investigator in the county prosecutor's office or county or municipal police officer based on the officer's examination scores and seniority.

The county sheriff continues to be responsible for designating eligible officers to transition to county sheriff's officer positions. The bill also reduces the number of months that the county corrections officer is required to have served in a county correctional facility to be eligible for the GAP program from 36 months to 12 months. The bill acknowledges that there are instances in which the county correctional facility is under the jurisdiction of the chief executive officer of the county rather than the county sheriff.

Finally, the bill authorizes county corrections officers to laterally transfer to a position as a county sheriff's officer, detective or investigator in the county prosecutor's office, or county or municipal police officer anywhere in the State, not just the county in which they serve.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill is not certified as requiring a fiscal note.