

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5854

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 16, 2021

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5854.

This bill requires the Division of Veterans' Healthcare Services in the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to establish a position to be known as a resident advocate at each State veterans' memorial home. The bill also requires that the resident advocate would have a direct reporting relationship to the director of the division.

Under the bill, the resident advocate would:

- (1) act as a liaison between the State veterans' memorial home and each of the residents at the State veterans' memorial home;
- (2) receive complaints from residents at the State veterans memorial home; and
- (3) respond to any concerns or grievances from the residents at the State veterans' memorial home and, if appropriate, submit concerns or grievances to the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

The bill also requires the division to develop, publish, and distribute a written and electronic complaint form to be used by the resident advocate to record any received complaints from the residents at the State veterans' memorial home and establishes a record retention requirement for those complaints.

Currently, the three State veterans' memorial homes are the following: The New Jersey Veterans' Memorial Home-Menlo Park; the New Jersey Veterans' Memorial Home-Vineland, and the New Jersey Veterans' Memorial Home-Paramus.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that the enactment of this bill would result in an indeterminate increase in annual State expenditures to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA). The increase in State costs would be primarily to provide for the hiring of a full-time resident advocate at each of the three State veterans memorial homes, which would include costs associated with salary and fringe benefits. The bill may also result in increased State costs to DMVA to the extent that additional staff, materials and supplies, and office space may be needed to support the role of the resident advocate.

The increased State costs generally assume the hiring of new employees; however it is possible that the department would establish this position and appoint an existing employee of the department for the newly created position. If DMVA appoints an existing employee for the position, the potential annual State costs could be reduced because of the relocation of existing resources and changing the role of current employees.