

ASSEMBLY HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 35

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 10, 2020

The Assembly Human Services Committee reports favorably Assembly Resolution No. 35.

This resolution respectfully urges all law enforcement agencies to provide training to law enforcement officers on how to approach individuals who are hearing impaired. Individuals who are hearing impaired face increased stress when interacting with law enforcement officers given the communication barriers between the two parties. Approximately 850,000 individuals in New Jersey are hearing impaired and, therefore, are subject to this communication barrier with law enforcement officers. Individuals who are hearing impaired have unique ways of communicating that should be understood by law enforcement officers. Effective communication between individuals who are hearing impaired and law enforcement officers is essential in ascertaining what actually occurred, the urgency of the matter, and the type of situation.

Law enforcement agencies around the country have taken steps on how to effectively and appropriately approach individuals who are hearing impaired. The New Jersey Police Training Commission currently mandates basic training courses for officers on how to interact with individuals with special needs, including individuals who are hearing impaired. However, a more comprehensive training program, focused exclusively on how to approach individuals who are hearing impaired, could help to overcome the communication barriers between law enforcement officers and individuals who are hearing impaired. Improved communication between law enforcement officers and individuals who are hearing impaired could lead to better outcomes for the two parties.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.