SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 238

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 30, 2020

The Senate Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably a Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 238.

As reported by the committee, this Senate committee substitute revises current law regarding the Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary.

Under current law, a person between the ages of 14 and 21 who obtains permission from a parent or guardian may become a member of the Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary with a volunteer fire department. This committee substitute reduces the age limit for membership to persons between the ages of 14 and 18.

The committee substitute also allows a fire district, regional authority, or county in this State that maintains a paid or volunteer fire department to establish a Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary. Under current law, only volunteer fire departments are permitted to establish a Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary.

In addition, the committee substitute requires Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary applicants to be interviewed by officers of the fire department with a parent or guardian present. Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary applicants also are required to submit documentation from a qualified physician verifying that the applicant is medically able to perform the activities of the auxiliary.

Current labor law provides that minors under the age of 18 are prohibited from participating in certain work-related tasks, but allow an exemption for members of the Junior Firefighters' Auxiliary who are 16 years of age or older and perform authorized fire-related duties. This committee substitute reduces this age exemption from 16 to 14 years of age.

The committee substitute also grants the Commissioner of Community Affairs authority to promulgate regulations pertaining to the training of Junior Firefighter Auxiliary members and establish the duties they may perform at training events and emergency scenes. The regulations are to become effective immediately upon being filed with the Office of Administrative Law and remain in effect for 180 days. Thereafter, the commissioner is required to amend, adopt, or readopt the regulations in accordance with "Administrative Procedure Act."

Finally, the committee substitute replaces the term “firemen” with the preferred, gender neutral term, “firefighter.”