

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR
CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 371

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 27, 2020

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 371.

This bill establishes a program to enroll inmates into Medicaid prior to their release from incarceration and assist inmates to access healthcare providers following their release.

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Corrections is required to establish within each State correctional facility a peer mentoring program comprised of inmates trained to assist other inmates to apply for Medicaid. The bill requires the Office of Transitional Services (OTS) within the Department of Corrections (DOC) to select inmates who volunteer to serve as peer mentors to educate fellow inmates who are eligible for release about the Medicaid enrollment process. The peer mentors are to be responsible for advising inmates about the federal requirement that all individuals maintain health care coverage and the potential tax liability if a person is uninsured. In addition, peer mentors are to educate inmates about the benefits of applying for Medicaid; provide presentations during Medicaid pre-enrollment classes; and provide guidance and assistance throughout the pre-enrollment process. The bill requires OTS to train peer mentors to carry out these responsibilities.

In addition, the bill requires OTS, in consultation with the Department of Human Services (DHS), to establish a Medicaid pre-release enrollment program for inmates who are within 90 days of their date of release from incarceration. Under the program, the OTS would establish a pre-release enrollment class utilizing the trained peer mentors to educate inmates about the benefits of applying for Medicaid and the various managed care plans offered by Medicaid. Within one week of the pre-enrollment class, the OTS would be required to assist inmates in making a managed care selection and applying for medical assistance benefits under the Medicaid program.

The bill also requires OTS to coordinate with DHS to provide eligible inmates with a Medicaid eligibility identification card on the date the inmate is released from incarceration. The Medicaid eligibility determination would be based on information provided by the inmate prior to the scheduled date of release from incarceration as well as the medical history provided by the DOC.

Finally, the bill requires every inmate with complex health needs to be assigned a case manager from a Medicaid managed care organization chosen by the inmate. The bill defines “complex health needs” as a medical condition that is a mental illness, substance use disorder, infectious disease, chronic condition, or fatal illness for which an inmate received continuous treatment while incarcerated.

The bill requires case managers to establish for each inmate with complex health needs a transition plan to coordinate the inmate’s access to medical care and services following the inmate’s release from incarceration. In establishing the transition plan, the case manager may communicate with the inmate regarding the inmate’s health care needs via a video conference call. The transition plan is to include an initial appointment with a primary care physician who accepts Medicaid and a list of any scheduled follow-up appointments. The transition plan also is to include assistance with coordinating other services including, but not limited to, locating available housing and accessible transportation in close proximity to the inmate’s healthcare providers. The bill requires the DOC to provide each inmate with the transition plan upon the date on which the inmate is released from incarceration.

The case manager also is required to contact the inmate within five days after the date of the inmate’s release from incarceration to assist the inmate with accessing care according to the transition plan. The assistance provided is to include identifying and removing barriers to care and addressing any additional needs that are expressed by the inmate. After three unsuccessful attempts to contact the inmate, the case manager would be required to send to the inmate a letter with the case manager’s contact information to request assistance.

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.