SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 375

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 27, 2020

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 375.

This bill authorizes county correctional facilities to use inmate welfare funds to provide or coordinate reentry services for inmates incarcerated in the facility.

The sources of income of inmate welfare funds are sales at the prison commissary, interest on welfare fund savings, gifts from individuals, corporations and charitable foundations, and income from inmate trust fund investments. The funds are maintained by local boards of trustees. State regulations require the funds to be used for amenities for the use, benefit, and general welfare of the inmate population as a whole. These amenities include, but are not limited to: recreation and sports equipment; television services; awards for academic, vocational, and sporting achievements; library books, movies, magazines, and other subscriptions; annual licensing fees for a film blanket license visit; recreation, holiday, and inmate incentive program decorations and food; stipends for referees and guest speakers; and equipment to enhance the law library that is not otherwise required for legal access.

This bill expands the use of these inmate welfare funds to include reentry services for county inmates to assist them in successfully transitioning into the community after they are released from incarceration. The bill specifically authorizes the use of these funds to pay salaries of employees in the facility whose duties include assisting inmates in accessing available federal, State, or other benefits or services, such as Medicaid, assistance programs, housing, and substance use disorder treatment.

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.