SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 961

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 30, 2020

The Senate Higher Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 961.

This bill establishes an annual grant program under the State's Troops to College Program which was established in 2009 to assist New Jersey's public institutions of higher education in coordinating the provision of a comprehensive array of services to assist veterans in making the transition into the college classroom. This bill will recognize and support those efforts through the establishment of an annual grant program. The program will be developed by the Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs. Under the program, the secretary will annually select up to three public institutions of higher education to receive a $150,000 Troops to College grant. In order to receive a grant, an institution must demonstrate that it is offering a comprehensive array of services, benefits, and programs for veterans attending the institution.

The bill outlines a number of factors that the secretary will consider in awarding the grants that include among others: the total number of veterans enrolled in the institution; the existence of a veterans' affairs office at the institution and the number of staff assigned to the office; whether the institution participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program of the "Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008"; the amount of institutional funds allocated to support veterans enrolled in the institution, including the number of scholarships offered to veteran students; whether the institution offers veteran housing or provides an area on campus where veteran students may meet and discuss issues of common interest; the institution's retention and graduation rates for veterans enrolled in the institution; and the employment and salary status of veterans six years following graduation from the institution.