

SENATE, No. 2397

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 7, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI

District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)

Senator JOSEPH P. CRYAN

District 20 (Union)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Weinberg, Diegnan and Greenstein

SYNOPSIS

Establishes COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program in DHS.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/25/2020)

1 **AN ACT** establishing the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local
2 Grant Program.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. a. There is hereby established in the Department of Human
8 Services the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant
9 Program. The goal of the program shall be to award one-time
10 grants to certain municipalities in order to provide residents, who
11 have been financially affected by the coronavirus disease 2019
12 (COVID-19) outbreak, with transitional assistance. As used in this
13 act, “transitional assistance” means any form of support, monetary
14 or otherwise, provided to eligible low-income individuals and
15 families to meet their basic needs and achieve long term economic
16 self-sufficiency.

17 In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this program, a
18 municipality shall: (1) have a population of 50,000 or less, as
19 determined by the most recent federal decennial census; and (2)
20 designate an existing local assistance board, social services agency,
21 board of health, COVID-19 relief fund, or some other entity
22 approved by the Commissioner of Human Services, to administer
23 the distribution of grant funds to residents, provided that if a
24 municipality does not deem an existing entity appropriate for this
25 task, the municipality may establish an entity for this purpose
26 within 60 days of the effective date of this act.

27 Municipalities shall apply for a grant in a method, manner, and
28 time frame determined by the Commissioner of Human Services,
29 provided that all grant funds shall be awarded to municipalities no
30 later than six months following the effective date of this act.
31 Municipalities may retain counsel for the purpose of assisting in the
32 application and administration of the grant program. The
33 Commissioner of Human Services shall award all eligible
34 municipalities a grant award equal to \$5,000 for every 7,500
35 residents of the municipality, as determined by the most recent
36 federal decennial census, and within the limits of available funds. If
37 eligible grant awards exceed the available funds, the commissioner
38 shall adjust this formula in such a manner that will result in an
39 equitable distribution among the eligible municipalities based upon
40 each municipality’s population.

41 Upon receipt of a grant award, a municipality’s designated entity
42 shall immediately commence accepting and evaluating applications
43 for transitional assistance submitted by residents. All applications
44 shall be submitted using a universal form designed for the COVID-
45 19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program by the
46 Commissioner of Human Services and made available in a digital
47 format on the Department of Human Services’ website. The form
48 shall include restrictions on the receipt of assistance, as determined

1 by the Commissioner, such as, but not limited to, eligibility criteria
2 and the amount of time an individual can receive assistance. The
3 designated entity shall distribute transitional assistance benefits
4 within 30 days of determining an applicant's eligibility, and shall
5 continue to accept and evaluate applications until all grant funds are
6 expended.

7 b. The Office of the State Comptroller shall conduct an audit of
8 the distribution of transitional assistance by each designated
9 municipal entity provided a grant award under this act, and submit
10 the audit to the Commissioner of Human Services, the Governor,
11 and the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
12 (C.52:14-19.1), within 18 months of the effective date of this act.

13
14 2. There is appropriated \$3,500,000 from the General Fund to
15 the Department of Human Services to fulfill the provisions of this
16 act.

17
18 3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon
19 the submission of the audit to the Commissioner of Human
20 Services, Governor, and Legislature by the Office of the State
21 Comptroller pursuant to subsection b. of section 1 of this act.

22 23 24 STATEMENT

25
26 This bill establishes the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance
27 Local Grant Program in the Department of Human Services. The
28 goal of the program is to award one-time grants to certain
29 municipalities in order to provide residents, who have been
30 financially affected by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)
31 outbreak, with transitional assistance. As used in the bill,
32 "transitional assistance" means any form of support, monetary or
33 otherwise, provided to eligible low-income individuals and families
34 to meet their basic needs and achieve long term economic self-
35 sufficiency.

36 In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this program, a
37 municipality is required to: (1) have a population of 50,000 or less,
38 as determined by the most recent federal decennial census; and (2)
39 designate an existing local assistance board, social services agency,
40 board of health, COVID-19 relief fund, or some other entity
41 approved by the Commissioner of Human Services, to administer
42 the distribution of grant funds to residents, provided that if a
43 municipality does not deem an existing entity appropriate for this
44 task, the municipality may establish an entity for this purpose
45 within 60 days of the effective date of the bill.

46 Municipalities are to apply for a grant in a method, manner, and
47 time frame determined by the Commissioner of Human Services,
48 provided that all grant funds are to be awarded no later than six

1 months following the effective date of this act. The bill also
2 expressly permits municipalities to retain counsel for the purpose of
3 assisting in the application and administration of the grant program.

4 The Commissioner of Human Services is to award all eligible
5 municipalities a grant award equal to \$5,000 for every 7,500
6 residents of the municipality, within the limits of available funds.
7 Specifically, the bill appropriates \$3.5 million from the General
8 Fund to the Department of Human Services to fulfill the provisions
9 of the bill. If eligible grant awards exceed the available funds, the
10 commissioner is to adjust this formula in such a manner that will
11 result in an equitable distribution among the eligible municipalities
12 based upon each municipality's population.

13 Upon receipt of a grant award, a municipality's designated entity
14 is required to immediately commence accepting and evaluating
15 applications for transitional assistance submitted by residents. All
16 applications are to be submitted using a universal form designed for
17 the COVID-19 Transitional Assistance Local Grant Program by the
18 Commissioner of Human Services and made available in a digital
19 format on the Department of Human Services' website. The form is
20 required to include restrictions on the receipt of assistance, as
21 determined by the Commissioner, such as, but not limited to,
22 eligibility criteria and the amount of time an individual can receive
23 payments. The designated entity is to distribute transitional
24 assistance benefits within 30 days of determining an applicant's
25 eligibility, and shall continue to accept and evaluate applications
26 until all grant funds are expended.

27 Under the bill, the Office of the State Comptroller is directed to
28 conduct an audit of the distribution of transitional assistance by a
29 designated municipal entity provided a COVID-19 Transitional
30 Assistance Local Grant, and submit the audit to the Commissioner
31 of Human Services, the Governor, and the Legislature within 18
32 months of the effective date of this bill. The bill is to take effect
33 immediately and expire upon the submission of this audit.