

SENATE, No. 2487

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 14, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator RONALD L. RICE

District 28 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “2020 New Jersey Burial Assistance Program;” appropriates \$20 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing the “2020 New Jersey Burial Assistance
2 Program,” supplementing chapter 13 of Title 26 of the Revised
3 Statutes and making a \$20 million appropriation.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*
7

8 1. a. There is established in the Department of Human
9 Services the “2020 New Jersey Burial Assistance Program” for the
10 purpose of providing financial assistance to individuals to cover
11 eligible funeral expenses related to COVID-19 deaths during the
12 COVID-19 crisis.

13 b. The Commissioner of Human Services shall administer this
14 program and adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,”
15 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1), rules and regulations to implement
16 this program. The commissioner shall determine eligible funeral
17 expenses, establish a maximum amount of assistance per applicant,
18 and devise a formula for the distribution of an amount of program
19 funds to each applicant based on household income and need.

20 c. In order to qualify for this program, an applicant shall
21 comply with the following conditions of eligibility:

22 (1) the applicant is a New Jersey resident;

23 (2) the applicant is filing for a death that a state, local,
24 territorial, or tribal (SLTT) government licensed medical official
25 has attributed to COVID-19;

26 (3) the applicant incurred or will incur eligible funeral expenses,
27 not covered by other sources such as burial insurance or financial
28 assistance from voluntary agencies, applicable government
29 programs, or other entities; and

30 (4) the applicant will provide to the Department of Human
31 Services the following documentation:

32 (a) an official death certificate or a signed statement from a
33 SLLT government licensed medical officer attributing the death to
34 COVID-19;

35 (b) an itemized funeral bill, any funeral receipts, and a funeral
36 contract signed by the funeral director, indicating the applicant
37 incurred or will incur eligible funeral expenses;

38 (c) documentation of burial insurance and any forms of funeral
39 assistance received from voluntary agencies, government agencies,
40 charities, or other entities;

41 (d) information and documentation regarding the applicant’s
42 available household assets and income as of the date of the death;
43 and

44 (e) proof of New Jersey residency.

45 d. As used in this section:

46 “COVID-19” means the coronavirus disease 2019, which is a
47 highly infectious disease that causes respiratory illness.

1 “COVID-19 crisis” means the duration of the public health
2 emergency and state of emergency, as declared by the Governor in
3 Executive Order 103 of 2020.

4 e. The commissioner shall identify amounts of federal
5 government assistance provided to this State for COVID-19
6 emergency relief, which can be allocated to this program.
7

8 2. There is appropriated to the Department of Human Services
9 the sum of \$20 million to be credited to the “2020 New Jersey
10 Burial Assistance Program” to effectuate the provisions of P.L. ,
11 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill). The
12 amounts appropriated herein shall be funded first from assistance
13 provided from the federal government to the extent not prohibited
14 by federal law. The remaining amounts necessary to fund this
15 program are appropriated from the General Fund.
16

17 3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire one
18 year following the rescission of Executive Order No. 103 of 2020
19 by the Governor.
20
21

22 STATEMENT

23

24 This bill establishes in the Department of Human Services a
25 burial assistance program for individuals, whose loved ones have
26 died to COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus 2019, during the
27 COVID-19 crisis. The COVID-19 crisis has placed the State under
28 a state of emergency and has been declared a public health
29 emergency, pursuant to Executive Order No. 103 of 2020 by the
30 Governor. This crisis has resulted in thousands of casualties over a
31 short period of time and has caused economic hardships, such as
32 shut down businesses and job losses. These factors make
33 unexpected burial costs more burdensome for some individuals,
34 especially those of low-income. The bill appropriates \$100 million
35 to provide burial assistance for qualifying funeral expenses to New
36 Jersey residents.

37 This bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services to
38 implement this program. The commissioner will determine eligible
39 funeral expenses, establish a maximum amount of assistance per
40 applicant, and devise a formula for the distribution of an amount of
41 program funds to each applicant based on household income and
42 need. This bill also directs the commissioner to identify amounts of
43 federal government assistance provided to this State for COVID-19
44 relief, which can be allocated to this program

45 In order to qualify for this program, the applicant is required to
46 be a New Jersey resident; the applicant is filing for a death
47 attributed to COVID-19; and the applicant incurred or will incur
48 eligible funeral expenses not covered by other sources. The

1 applicant will also provide to the Department of Human Services
2 the following documentation: an official death certificate or a
3 signed statement from a SLLT government licensed medical officer,
4 attributing the death to COVID-19; an itemized funeral bill, any
5 funeral receipts, and a funeral contract indicating the applicant
6 incurred or will incur eligible funeral expenses; documentation of
7 burial insurance and any forms of funeral assistance received from
8 other sources; information and documentation regarding the
9 applicant's available household assets and income as of the date of
10 the death; and proof of New Jersey residency.

11 The bills specifies that the \$20 million being credited to the
12 "2020 New Jersey Burial Assistance Program" in the Department of
13 Human Services will first be funded using any available federal
14 assistance given to the State, to the extent not prohibited by federal
15 law, and that the remaining amounts necessary to fund this program
16 are appropriated from the General Fund. This bill takes effect
17 immediately and will expire one year following the rescission of
18 Executive Order No. 103 of 2020 by the Governor