

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2490

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JULY 20, 2020

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 2490.

As amended by the committee, this bill requires health care facilities to establish procedures to screen health care workers and first responders, upon intake for inpatient or outpatient services, for the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Each facility is to implement measures to avoid performing redundant screenings on a given health care worker or first responder, both at that facility and at other facilities throughout the State, unless the individual requests a subsequent screening or a subsequent screening appears to be clinically appropriate. Health care workers and first responders will have the right to refuse to be screened for the symptoms of PTSD related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the event a health care worker or first responder screens positive for the symptoms of PTSD related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the facility will be required to offer to assist the individual with referrals to appropriate treatment resources and a link to informational resources that are required to be published on the Internet website of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) in the Department of Human Services under the bill.

The DMHAS, in consultation with the Department of Health, will be required to identify or develop a PTSD screening tool, along with guidance concerning the use of the screening tool, for use by health care facilities in complying with the requirements of the bill. In addition, the DMHAS is to provide other resources and implement other programs and initiatives as it deems appropriate to meet the clinical needs of health care workers and first responders experiencing PTSD related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Health will be required to post a link to the DMHAS informational resource page on the department's Internet website.

The bill additionally requires health care facilities employing health care workers or first responders who provided services in

response to the COVID-19 pandemic or who provided essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that those health care workers and first responders are provided with information concerning available resources and services for PTSD related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including, but not limited to, employee assistance programs and a link to the DMHAS informational resource page.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments make the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) in the Department of Human Services primarily responsible for implementing the screening program under the bill, rather than jointly developing the program with the Department of Health. The DMHAS will still be required to consult with the Department of Health when implementing the program.

The committee amendments remove language that would have made the bill applicable to “other frontline workers.”

The committee amendments provide that the DMHAS may either identify a screening tool or develop its own screening tool for the purposes of the bill.

The committee amendments provide that, rather than hosting its own informational resource page, the Department of Health will provide a link on its Internet website to the resource page developed by DMHAS under the bill.