SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2492

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. 2492.

As amended, this bill requires the Commissioner of Human Services to establish a public awareness campaign to provide information to the general public concerning the programs and services available for first responders, healthcare workers, other frontline workers, and their families experiencing mental health issues related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, including, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder.

In establishing the public awareness campaign, the commissioner will be required to develop outreach efforts and provide information to the general public on: the link between mental health issues and the COVID-19 pandemic, including, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder; resources for first responders, healthcare workers, other frontline workers, and their families experiencing mental health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the programs and services provided by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and other federal, State, and local social services and mental health agencies; any telephone helpline established by the Department of Human Services for first responders and healthcare workers experiencing mental health issues due to their work during the pandemic; and anxiety reducing strategies and other methods to manage stress, depression, and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the bill: the public awareness campaign is to target the general public and first responders, healthcare workers, other frontline workers, and their families experiencing mental health issues through a variety of media, including television, radio, print, and on the DHS's Internet website; and the commissioner will provide for the development of advertisements, by signs, billboards, placards, posters

and displays placed on New Jersey Transit bus, rail, and light rail system, in English and Spanish, on the public awareness campaign.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments expand the scope of information provided by the public awareness campaign to include any mental health issue related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), including, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder.

The committee amendments also expand the list of individuals that would be targeted by the public awareness campaign established under the bill to include the families of first responders, healthcare workers, and other frontline workers experiencing mental health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The committee amendments update the title and synopsis of the bill to reflect the amendments.