SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2894

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 6, 2021

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 2894.

This bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to conduct a biennial survey for the purpose of evaluating the experience of applicants and beneficiaries under the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The survey is to include, at a minimum, questions concerning: the experience of the applicant or beneficiary in navigating the SNAP application process; any difficulties the applicant or beneficiary encountered in the application process; the availability of consumer support at the county welfare agency; and how well the applicant's or beneficiary's questions and concerns were addressed by staff at the county welfare agency.

The purpose of each biennial survey is to: identify the strengths and weaknesses of each county welfare agency in processing SNAP applications; formulate trainings or strategies to improve the processing of SNAP applications; and assess which counties require additional resource and staff support. The DHS will be required to ensure the survey is distributed to each SNAP applicant and beneficiary at each county welfare agency throughout the duration of the survey period. Within 18 months after each biennial survey is completed, the Commissioner of Human Services will be required to submit a report to the Legislature documenting the results of the biennial survey and providing the commissioner's recommendations for legislation or other appropriate action.

As reported by the committee with amendments, Senate Bill No. 2894 is identical to Assembly Bill No. 4241 (1R) which was also amended and reported by the committee on this date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments require the SNAP survey to be conducted on a biennial, rather than a one-time, basis.

The committee amendments clarify that the survey is to be of SNAP applicants and beneficiaries, and not county welfare agencies.

The committee amendments require the DHS to ensure the survey is distributed to all SNAP applicants and beneficiaries throughout each survey period.

The committee amendments remove a requirement for the DHS to make the survey data available on its Internet website.

The committee amendments require the Commissioner of Human Services to file a report in association with each biennial survey.

The committee amendments revise a reference to the Department of Health to instead refer to the Department of Human Services and make a number of minor technical changes involving syntax.

The committee amendments update the synopsis of the bill to reflect these changes.