SENATE, No. 2978

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator LINDA R. GREENSTEIN
District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)
Senator JOSEPH F. VITALE
District 19 (Middlesex)

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SYNOPSIS

"Personal Protective Equipment Insecurity Act"; requires Commissioner of Human Services to provide recipients of SNAP with stipend for personal protective equipment; appropriates $5 million from Coronavirus Relief Fund to DHS.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/24/2020)

AN ACT concerning personal protective equipment for recipients of the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and making an appropriation.

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

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Personal Protective Equipment Insecurity Act."

2. a. The Commissioner of Human Services shall provide a monthly stipend to recipients of SNAP benefits for the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect beneficiaries against the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) virus. This initiative shall commence upon the effective date of this act and shall continue until the first day of the 13th month after which the United States Food and Drug Administration approves a vaccine for the COVID-19 virus, provided that federal funds are available for the stipend pursuant to section 2 of this act.

b. The commissioner shall:

(1) issue the monthly stipend to a beneficiary in the form and manner in which the beneficiary receives SNAP benefits;

(2) determine the monthly stipend amount for a beneficiary based on the number of beneficiaries in the SNAP household and the availability of funds;

(3) distribute information regarding the PPE stipend to SNAP beneficiaries and to county welfare agencies, and post information regarding the PPE stipend on the department's Internet website; and

(4) take any other action deemed necessary to fulfill the provisions of this section.

c. As used in this section:

"Personal protective equipment" means equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious illnesses or infection from viral or communicable diseases, including, but not limited to, disposable gloves, facial masks, and facial shields.

"SNAP" means the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, established pursuant to the federal " Food and Nutrition Act of 2008," Pub.L.110-246 (7 U.S.C. s.2011 et seq.).

3. There is appropriated to the Department of Human Services the sum of $5 million from a portion of those federal block grant funds allocated to the State from the federal "Coronavirus Relief Fund," established pursuant to the federal "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act," Pub.L.116-136, for use by the department to effectuate the purposes of this act.

4. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire on the first day of the 13th month after which the United States Food and Drug Administration approves a vaccine for the COVID-19 virus.

STATEMENT

This bill, to be known as the "Personal Protective Equipment Insecurity Act," requires the Commissioner of Human Services to provide recipients of the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP, with a stipend for personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect beneficiaries against the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) virus. Under the bill, PPE means equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious illnesses or infection from viral or communicable diseases, including, but not limited to, disposable gloves, facial masks, and facial shields.

SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a nutrition assistance program that serves as a safety net for low-income households. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that low-income households face a higher risk of developing a severe case of COVID-19 if infected with the virus. Studies also confirm that face masks, a form of PPE, decrease the risk of COVID-19 infection by 65 percent. It is the sponsor's intent to use the SNAP program as the means to support the State's most financially vulnerable in protecting themselves against COVID-19.

Specifically, the bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services to commence this initiative upon the effective date of the bill and to continue the initiative until the first day of the 13th month after which the United States Food and Drug Administration approves a vaccine for the COVID-19 virus, provided that federal funds are available for the stipend. The bill appropriates to the Department of Human Services the sum of $5 million from a portion of the federal block grant funds allocated to the State from the federal "Coronavirus Relief Fund," established pursuant to the federal "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act," Pub.L.116-136, for use by the department to effectuate the purposes of the bill.

Under the bill, the commissioner is also directed to:

1) issue the monthly stipend to a beneficiary in the form and manner in which the beneficiary receives SNAP benefits;

2) determine the monthly stipend amount for a beneficiary based on the number of beneficiaries in the SNAP household and the availability of funds;

3) distribute information regarding the PPE stipend to SNAP beneficiaries and to county welfare agencies, and post information regarding the PPE stipend on the department's Internet website; and

4) take any other action deemed necessary to fulfill the provisions of the bill.