

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 3031

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 22, 2021

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3031 (1R).

This bill requires the Department of Health (DOH) to establish certain nursing education and professional advancement programs.

Under the bill, the DOH, in consultation with the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, is to develop an infection prevention course specifically designed for licensed practical nurses and registered nurses employed in a long-term care facility. The DOH is to develop methods to encourage and incentivize licensed practical nurses and registered nurses to complete the infection prevention course. The infection prevention course is to include instruction on the following topics: (1) modes of transmission, incubation periods, host resistance, and susceptibility to various infections and communicable diseases; (2) appropriate measures to prevent the spread of infection; (3) processes used to sterilize, disinfect, and sanitize a health care facility; (4) management and communication skills necessary for the coordination of an effective infection prevention program; (5) regulations which govern infection prevention practice; and (6) criteria for identifying health care associated infections in patients.

The bill requires the DOH, in consultation with the Board of Nursing, to review the current nursing curriculum and develop methods to encourage licensed practical nurses and registered nurses to enroll in post-acute care residency programs. The DOH, in consultation with the Board of Nursing, is to review the educational and clinical experience requirements for the completion of a nursing degree and determine if the requirements should be modified to better prepare licensed practical nurses and registered nurses to work in post-acute care settings.

Under the bill, the DOH is to develop an infection prevention course for certified nurse aides. The DOH is to include the infection prevention course as a required component of annual in-service education for certified nurse aides. The infection prevention course is to include instruction on the same topics as the course designed for registered nurses. The DOH is to review the current certified nurse aide curriculum, incorporate an infection prevention component into the curriculum, and make any other necessary modifications to the curriculum.

The bill provides that the DOH, in consultation with one or more long-term care facilities in this State and representatives of labor organizations, is to establish a pilot program to develop standards for the professional advancement of certified nurse aides. The standards for the professional advancement of certified nurse aides may be based on: previous work experience, education level, participation in educational opportunities, training, and work performance. The standards may also be based on any applicable out-of-State models for the professional advancement of certified nurse aides.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates the Department of Health (DOH) will incur indeterminate costs in developing certain nursing educational programs, as outlined under the bill. The OLS assumes that such costs will be largely due to consulting with the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), as authorized under the bill, and contracting with the association for use of their existing program; however, the OLS does not have access to any data to quantify these expenses.

The OLS concludes that the New Jersey Board of Nursing will incur an indeterminate increase in costs to assist the DOH in reviewing certain nursing curriculum and requirements. The OLS assumes that the Board, as the entity responsible for licensing nurses and for approving nursing education programs, will be capable of complying with these provisions with minimal expense.

The OLS estimates that any methods developed by the DOH to encourage and incentivize nurses to enroll in and complete the various training opportunities established under the bill will likely add additional expenses to the underlying costs of establishing those programs. However, as the nature of such methods are yet to be determined, the OLS cannot quantify these costs or conclude if such costs will be, to any extent, the responsibility of the department.

Finally, the OLS concludes that the department will incur indeterminate costs in establishing a pilot program to develop standards for the professional advancement of certified nurse aides. To the extent that the department utilizes an applicable out-of-State model, as permitted under the bill, the department's expenses to fulfill this provision may be minimized. The OLS notes that: 1) depending on the model selected, there may be additional costs to implement the standards and that the department may be responsible, in part, for these expenses; 2) nursing homes operated by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) and certain county governments may experience expenses under the bill if such facilities consult with the department in the establishment of the pilot program.