SENATE STATE GOVERNMENT, WAGERING, TOURISM & HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 3727

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: NOVEMBER 15, 2021

The Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, and Historic Preservation Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3727.

This bill directs the Division of Travel and Tourism in the Department of State to identify, in consultation with the New Jersey Black Cultural and Heritage Commission, established under the bill, a series of Black heritage sites to be part of a New Jersey Black Heritage Trail. The purpose of the Black Heritage Trail would be to promote awareness and appreciation of Black history, heritage, and culture in the State through education, public programs, and historical markers. The Black Heritage Trail would highlight Black heritage sites through historical markers and a trail-like path that connect the stories of Black life and resiliency in the State.

The bill requires that the Black heritage sites along the Black Heritage Trail be geographically linked by relevant arts, cultural, historical, entertainment, or other tourism destinations. Under this bill, the division would develop and maintain an interactive Internet site providing information concerning Black heritage sites in the State. The division is required to update the Internet site whenever local government officials or entities, the owners or operators of Black heritage sites, or entities that identify and compile data on historical trails, sites, or memorials notify the division of new Black heritage sites. The Internet site would also provide vacation itineraries based on the Black Heritage Trail, which would identify surrounding attractions, restaurants, lodging, and other exhibits or places of entertainment along the trail.

Under the bill, the New Jersey Black Cultural and Heritage Commission is created in, but not of, the Department of State to promote awareness and appreciation of Black history, heritage, and culture in the State through education and public programs including the creation of appropriate memorials at significant locations within the State. The commission would consist of 11 members, of whom: two public members would be appointed, one each, by the President and Minority Leader of the Senate; two public members would be appointed, one each, by the Speaker and Minority Leader of the General Assembly; and seven public members would be appointed by the Governor. The public

members are required to be residents of the State, represent the various geographical areas of the State, and be representatives of Black arts, history, or culture organizations or be persons having knowledge of, expertise in, or a commitment to the collection, recordation, and preservation of the history and culture of Black people in New Jersey.

For nearly 400 years, the lives of African people and their descendants have been a part of New Jersey's history. Black history, heritage, and culture has long been hidden in the shadows even though so many Black lives have left an indelible mark on New Jersey industry, culture, and arts. This bill establishes a heritage trail and a cultural heritage commission that will connect the stories of New Jersey's African heritage by documenting and making visible many of the heritage sites that testify to this rich history.

Senate Bill No. 3727 is identical to Assembly Bill No. 4706 (1R) of the 2020-2021 session./