SENATE, No. 4129

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 12, 2021

Sponsored by:
Senator VIN GOPAL
District 11 (Monmouth)
Senator JAMES BEACH
District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes temporary COVID-19 Family Relief Assistance Office in DHS; appropriates $10 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/2/2021)

AN ACT establishing the temporary COVID-19 Family Relief Assistance Office in the Department of Human Services and making an appropriation.

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

1. a. There is established in the Department of Human Services the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Family Relief Assistance Office. The office shall be established no later than 180 days after the effective date of this act. The Commissioner of Human Services shall appoint a director, who shall supervise the office. The commissioner may employ such other personnel and staff as may be necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the office without regard to the provisions of Title 11A, Civil Service, of the New Jersey Statutes. Persons appointed or employed as provided pursuant to this subsection shall be compensated in a manner similar to other employees in the Executive Branch, and their compensation shall be determined by the Civil Service Commission.

b. The office shall provide assistance to individuals who have experienced severe or chronic adverse health conditions resulting from COVID-19 infection, their families, and the family members of individuals who have died from COVID-19, in identifying and applying for State and federal assistance programs and other State and federal benefits that may be available and for which the individuals and their families may be eligible.

c. The office may establish grant programs, within the limits of appropriate funds available to the office for this purpose, to provide assistance with the unreimbursed costs related to a COVID-19 infection or death that are not covered by other benefits or assistance programs, which assistance shall be made available to individuals who have experienced severe or chronic adverse health conditions resulting from COVID-19 infection, their families, and the family members of individuals who have died from COVID-19. The director shall establish eligibility criteria and an application process for any grant program established pursuant to this paragraph.

d. In addition to using funds appropriated pursuant to section 2 of this act, the office may accept donations from individuals and organizations to support the provision of services pursuant to subsection b. of this section and to fund grant programs established pursuant to subsection c. of this section.

e. Commencing one year after it first organizes, and annually thereafter, the office shall submit a report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature, concerning its activities under this section, including the use of funds appropriated pursuant to section 2 of this act, the

types of assistance provided, the number of individuals to whom it provided assistance and services, the nature of any grant programs established, the source and amount of any donations accepted by the office, the source of funding for any grant programs established, the amount awarded in grants and the number of people to whom grants were awarded, and the effectiveness of existing State and federal programs in assisting individuals with issues related to COVID-19. The report shall include recommendations for legislation, administrative actions, or any other action that the office determines necessary and appropriate to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services and assistance provided to individuals in relation to COVID-19, as well as to State assistance and benefits programs generally. The office shall cease operations under subsections b. and c. of this section two years after the end of both the state of emergency and the public health emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and shall submit a final report concerning its activities under this section, including any final recommendations, to the Governor and to the Legislature no later than 45 days after it ceases operations. The office shall expire upon submission of its final report.

2. There is appropriated to the Department of Human Services from the General Fund the sum of $10,000,000 to implement the provisions of this act. Any unexpended funds from this amount appropriated shall be transferred to the State Treasury upon the expiration of this act.

3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon submission of the final report by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Family Relief Assistance Office as provided in subsection e. of section 1 of this act.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Family Relief Assistance Office in the Department of Human Services.

The office is to be established no later than 180 days after the effective date of the bill. The Commissioner of Human Services will appoint a director to supervise the office, and may employ such other personnel and staff as may be required to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the office without regard to the provisions of Title 11A, Civil Service, of the New Jersey Statutes.

The purpose of the office will be to provide assistance to individuals who have experienced severe or chronic adverse health conditions resulting from COVID-19 infection, their families, and the family members of individuals who have died from COVID-19,

in identifying and applying for State and federal assistance programs and other State and federal benefits that may be available and for which the individuals and their families may be eligible.

The office may additionally establish grant programs, within the limits of funds made available to the office for this purpose, to provide assistance with the costs related to a COVID-19 infection or death that are not covered by other benefits or assistance programs, which assistance will be made available to individuals who have experienced severe or chronic adverse health conditions resulting from COVID-19 infection, their families, and the family members of individuals who have died from COVID-19. The director will establish eligibility criteria and an application process for any grant program established under the bill.

The bill appropriates $10 million from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services for the purpose of implementing the bill. Any unexpended funds will revert to the State Treasury when the bill expires. In addition, the office will be authorized to accept donations from individuals and groups for the purposes of supporting the provision of services and funding grant programs under the bill.

Commencing one year after it first organizes, and annually thereafter, the office will be required to submit a report to the Governor and to the Legislature concerning its activities, including the use of funds appropriated under the bill, the types of assistance provided, the number of individuals to whom it provided assistance and services, the nature of any grant programs established, the source and amount of any donations accepted by the office, the source of funding for any grant programs established, the amount awarded in grants and the number of people to whom grants were awarded, and the effectiveness of existing State and federal programs in assisting individuals with issues related to COVID-19. The report will also include recommendations for legislation, administrative action, or any other action that the office determines necessary and appropriate to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services and assistance provided to individuals in relation to COVID-19, as well as to State assistance and benefits programs generally.

The office will cease operations two years after the end of both the state of emergency and the public health emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and will thereafter have 45 days to submit a final report concerning its activities and recommendations. The bill will expire upon submission of the office's final report.