

# SENATE RESOLUTION No. 135

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 16, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator LORETTA WEINBERG**

**District 37 (Bergen)**

**Senator VIN GOPAL**

**District 11 (Monmouth)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Urges Governor to safely reopen State offices closed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/24/2021)

1   **A SENATE RESOLUTION** urging the Governor to safely reopen State  
2       offices closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.  
3  
4   **WHEREAS**, Rising COVID-19 infections prompted Governor Murphy  
5       to declare a Statewide stay-at-home-order on March 21, 2020  
6       through Executive Order No. 107, which required all employers to  
7       either reduce staff on site to the minimum number necessary or  
8       utilize work-from-home arrangements if feasible; and  
9   **WHEREAS**, According to statistics compiled by the State of New  
10       Jersey, the COVID-19 infection rate has dramatically decreased  
11       from 3,000 people per day to less than 700 per day and the number  
12       of patients hospitalized due to COVID-19 has decreased from 2,300  
13       to under 700 as of May 26, 2021; and  
14   **WHEREAS**, In the State of New Jersey alone, over 4 million residents  
15       are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and an additional 4.7  
16       million have received at least one dose of the vaccine as of May 26,  
17       2021; and  
18   **WHEREAS**, In response to the diminished threat of COVID-19, the  
19       staff reduction and work-from-home requirements ordered by  
20       Executive Order No. 107 were rescinded by Executive Order No.  
21       243 on May 26, 2021, yet a majority of State departments and  
22       agencies continue to limit the number of staff working on-site and  
23       continue to utilize work-from-home arrangements for both essential  
24       and non-essential employees; and  
25   **WHEREAS**, Many State departments and agencies provide invaluable  
26       services to the residents of the State of New Jersey, many of which  
27       are particularly important during a time of crisis such as the  
28       COVID-19 pandemic, and the quality of these services has  
29       decreased due to the restriction on employees working on-site; and  
30   **WHEREAS**, The online unemployment filing system managed by the  
31       Department of Labor and Workforce Development is not equipped  
32       to handle the substantial number of unemployment claims filed  
33       during the COVID-19 pandemic and many individuals have  
34       encountered issues during the unemployment filing process that are  
35       still unresolved due to the restriction on in-person customer  
36       assistance; and  
37   **WHEREAS**, The One-Stop Career Centers throughout the State  
38       managed by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
39       which provide employment assistance to many unemployed  
40       individuals remain closed and the failure to reopen these centers  
41       may result in further economic harm to the unemployed individual  
42       and in a larger scale, the State of New Jersey; and  
43   **WHEREAS**, Due to vaccination efforts that have led to a low infection  
44       and hospitalization rate in the State of New Jersey and the issues  
45       which have risen due to the closure of State offices, this House  
46       respectfully urges the Governor to safely reopen State agencies and  
47       departments, particularly those administering invaluable services

1 the provision of which benefit from in-person customer assistance  
2 to New Jersey residents; now, therefore,

3

4 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

5

6 1. This House respectfully urges the Governor to safely reopen  
7 State departments and agencies in light of the significant progress  
8 the State of New Jersey has achieved in combating the COVID-19  
9 pandemic.

10

11 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,  
12 shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the Governor  
13 and Lieutenant Governor of the State of New Jersey.

14

15

16

# STATEMENT

17

18 This resolution urges the Governor to safely reopen all State  
19 offices shuttered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The State of  
20 New Jersey has made significant progress in combating the  
21 COVID-19 pandemic. A high vaccination rate and stringent  
22 requirements for face coverings and social distancing have led to a  
23 dramatic decrease in COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations. In  
24 light of this success, Executive Order No. 243 overrides the  
25 minimum staff requirements and work-from-home  
26 recommendations that have been in place for over a year due to  
27 Executive Order No. 107. While many businesses and  
28 establishments have reopened and returned to full capacity, the  
29 majority of State offices remain either closed or only partially  
30 staffed.

31 State agencies and departments manage very important and  
32 invaluable services offered to the residents of the State of New  
33 Jersey. As an example, the Department of Labor and Workforce  
34 Development manages the online unemployment filing system that  
35 was not equipped to handle the surge of unemployment applications  
36 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further exacerbating the  
37 problem, many issues encountered by applicants, sometimes  
38 originating over a year ago, have not yet been resolved due to the  
39 closure of in-person services. The One-Stop Career Centers also  
40 managed by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
41 provide employment services to unemployed individuals, yet also  
42 remain closed. It is important that New Jersey residents are  
43 successful in accessing these services, as it may prevent further  
44 economic harm to both the individual and the State of New Jersey  
45 as a whole.