

# SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, No. 1591**

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: NOVEMBER 9, 2000

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably a committee substitute to Senate Bill No. 1591.

This substitute bill, the "New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Act," establishes the New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the program is to

- < improve the health and nutritional status of State residents in need of food assistance,
- < supplement the efforts of emergency food programs in the State to reduce hunger, and
- < enable families and individuals to become food secure and self-sufficient.

*Program goals.* The Commissioner of Human Services is to establish the program in conjunction with the regional food banks in the State. The goals of the program are to:

- (1) enhance the accessibility and availability of safe, nutritious food and food-related resources;
- (2) develop and provide nutrition education programs;
- (3) assess the needs of persons requesting food assistance and hunger-related issues to ensure program funds are used effectively; and
- (4) increase the independence from emergency food assistance programs of those who rely on such assistance.

*Program grants.* The bill provides that the program will make grants to emergency food programs in the State that offer emergency food services, nutrition education, and referral or outreach services to other programs serving the same population. Grant recipients will be required to report quarterly to the Department of Human Services on the use of the grant funds.

*Advisory committee.* The bill establishes a 13-member Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee in the Department of Human Services to assist the commissioner in the implementation of the program and to oversee a needs assessment to be conducted by Rutgers University.

The advisory committee shall consist of:

- < the Secretary of Agriculture and the Commissioners of Human Services and Community Affairs, or their designees, *ex officio*, and

< ten public members appointed by the Governor who shall include: two representatives of emergency food programs in the State; two representatives of programs serving homeless individuals in the State; the Executive Directors of the County Welfare Directors Association of New Jersey, the Municipal Welfare Association of New Jersey and the Association for Children of New Jersey, or their designees; a nutritionist; and two members of the public who are knowledgeable about emergency food programs.

*Needs assessment.* To maximize available food resources in the State and ensure that limited food resources and State funding are allocated in the most effective and efficient manner, the bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services to contract with Rutgers University to conduct a Statewide needs assessment to:

- identify and quantify "lost" food in the State's food system, identify ways to minimize food spoilage, and develop a plan to "rescue" such food for transport to the State's emergency feeding programs;

- identify and quantify the need for emergency or supplemental feeding for families and individuals in the State;

- develop strategies for behaviorally focused educational outreach with at-risk families and individuals; and

- analyze nutritional sufficiencies and deficiencies in existing emergency food programs and assist in developing nutritionally complete, culturally acceptable diets.

The commissioner and the advisory committee will use the information obtained from the needs assessment in determining the future allocation of grant funds under the program.

*Annual report.* The bill directs the commissioner to report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on the activities of the program. The report shall include a listing of the grants awarded under the program, the number of persons served through the grants and such other information as the commissioner deems appropriate.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This substitute bill appropriates up to \$5,000,000 from unexpended federal temporary assistance to needy family (TANF) funds to the Department of Human Services to carry out the purposes of the legislation. Of this appropriation, the department shall allocate up to \$250,000 to fund the conduct of the needs assessment and up to \$4,750,000 to fund grants to emergency food programs in the State.