

ASSEMBLY HOMELAND SECURITY AND STATE  
PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 815

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: MARCH 3, 2016

The Assembly Homeland Security and State Preparedness Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 815.

This bill requires county emergency management coordinators to establish a Code Blue Program for at-risk individuals who require shelter during a severe weather event. The purpose of the Code Blue Program is to identify at-risk individuals prior to, or during, a severe weather event and assist those individuals in voluntarily finding appropriate shelter.

The bill defines at-risk individual as an individual living outside, or in a building not meant for human habitation or which the person has no legal right to occupy. The phrase "severe weather event" is defined to include a snow emergency, excessive cold or heat, storms or other weather-related conditions, which may include temperatures equal to or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Under the Code Blue Program, county emergency management coordinators are required to declare a code blue alert within 24 hours prior to the onset of a severe weather event. Upon the declaration of a code blue alert, the county emergency management coordinator is to inform each municipal law enforcement agency in that county as well as the county police department, if appropriate, of the need to identify and locate at-risk individuals who may be in need of shelter. Municipal law enforcement agencies and county police departments would then conduct patrols to locate at-risk individuals, and transport or arrange for the transportation of those individuals to an appropriate shelter.

The bill also requires county emergency management coordinators to inform each county and municipal welfare agency responsible for placing homeless families and persons in shelters of the need to increase the shelter bed capacity. The bill further requires counties to establish emergency shelters for the homeless, which have been authorized by a public officer of the municipality or the Department of Community Affairs, to provide shelter, or food and shelter, to a specified number of individuals in excess of its licensed capacity because of emergency conditions.

Finally, the bill requires each county office of emergency management to conduct a public awareness campaign, utilizing the

Internet and any other available resources, to inform the general public of the code blue program and the importance of identifying at-risk individuals prior to a severe weather event so that appropriate shelter preparations may be made.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2016-2017 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.