STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 31, 2019

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 4704 (1R).

This bill requires the Department of Agriculture to establish a two-year food desert produce pilot program to provide food desert communities with access to fresh and affordable produce. In establishing the program, the department is to work with one or more providers to establish weekly markets in three food desert communities, one of which is to be located in a rural area, in order to make fruits and vegetables more affordable to families and individuals with limited access to fresh food. The bill requires that partnering providers be entities qualified to receive federal or State reimbursements for the acceptance of food vouchers.

In developing the program, the department will select partnering providers that can reliably and consistently provide fruits and vegetables to serve food desert communities year round. The weekly markets may be operated in partnership with local public schools or community organizations. The department is to additionally engage in outreach efforts concerning the availability of the program.

A partnering provider that operates a market will be required to: (1) demonstrate the ability to reliably provide a consistent, year-round supply of reasonably priced fresh fruits and vegetables; (2) accept cash, credit, debit, and food vouchers; (3) offer reduced price produce packages; (4) include storage guides containing information on how to keep the produce fresh and recipes for use of the produce; and (5) donate any surplus produce at the end of each market to food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and other nonprofit organizations that distribute food to individuals in need located in the State.

As reported by the committee, Assembly Bill No. 4704 (1R) is identical to Senate Bill No. 3237 (1R) which was also reported by the committee on this date.