

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 959

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 22, 2018

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 959 (1R).

This bill establishes the “New Jersey Caregiver Task Force” to evaluate caregiver support services in the State and provide recommendations for the improvement and expansion of such services.

The bill defines “caregiver support services” to mean any type of support or assistance made available to caregivers in the State, including but not limited to: financial support or assistance from any source, as well as any other type of support or assistance provided by public or private employers, hospitals, health care providers or organizations, or government agencies. The term “caregiver” means any person, regardless of age, who assists an elderly or functionally impaired individual perform daily tasks, in a non-medical setting and without compensation.

The task force will consist of 11 members: the Commissioner of Human Services, the State Director of the New Jersey chapter of the AARP or the director’s designee, the Executive Director of Caregivers of New Jersey, the Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey, the Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness New Jersey, the President of the Home Care and Hospice Association of New Jersey, the President of Leading Age New Jersey, and the President of the Alzheimer’s Association Greater New Jersey Chapter, or their designees; and three public members appointed by the Governor. The public members are to include one person who is a caregiver for a person with a disability, one person who is a caregiver for a person with mental illness, and one person who is a caregiver for an elderly person. The task force members serve without compensation, but are entitled to reimbursement for travel or other necessary expenses within the limits of funds appropriated to the task force. The task force is furthermore authorized to solicit, receive, and expend any grant moneys or other funds that may be made available for the task force’s purposes.

The task force is required to:

(1) identify existing caregiver support services available in the State;

(2) survey caregivers in the State in order to develop a summary of caregiver characteristics, including the numbers of caregivers in the State, their ages and geographic locations, the amount of time spent engaged in caregiving activities, the number of work absences due to caretaker activities, the nature of illnesses or conditions suffered by the persons being cared for, and existing support services most commonly utilized by caregivers; and

(3) receive testimony from caregivers regarding the type of tasks performed, feasibility of task delegation, sufficiency of caregiver training programs, caregiving costs, sufficiency of financial support services and respite care services, experiences of caregivers in relation to support services, caregiver experiences interacting with entities in relation to caregiving, use of medical leave, and any other topic relevant to the task force's responsibilities.

The task force is required to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature that details its findings and provides recommendations for legislation, or for regulatory or programmatic changes, that would improve, expand, or supplement existing caregiver support service programs and systems in the State, in response to caregiver concerns. The report is required to be submitted within 12 months after the task force's organization; on the 30th day following submission of the report, the task force dissolves and the provisions of the bill expire.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that the bill will result in an indeterminate, likely marginal, State expenditure increase. The New Jersey Caregiver Task Force will only be active for a period not to exceed one year but the period of activity is likely to be divided between two State fiscal years.

The task force will incur negligible costs, as its members will serve without compensation and will only receive reimbursement for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) will be required to provide staff support to the task force, which could require the use of employees' time that might otherwise be spent on other duties. If staff hours used to support the task force were to be equivalent to one full-time-equivalent (FTE) employee for the maximum 12-month active term of the task force, the salary, equipment, and fringe benefit costs for the single FTE would total up to \$120,000. Actual costs could differ based on the department's decisions about the level of staff support, and whether to use staff or consultants.