

ASSEMBLY TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND UTILITIES
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 2129

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 20, 2018

The Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2129 SCS.

As reported, this bill requires that unclaimed property deposits from an electric or gas public utility (utility) in the Unclaimed Utility Deposits Trust Fund (trust fund) be paid to a Statewide nonprofit energy assistance organization (assistance organization) meeting certain criteria. Under the bill, in order to be eligible to receive trust fund monies, an assistance organization designated by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) is required to: 1) have a network of no less than 200 partner organizations throughout all 21 counties in this State; 2) provide secure, online or in-person grant application access; 3) have a board of directors comprised of not less than five utility representatives; and 4) have an on-site customer service call center providing access to assistance offered in a minimum of 150 languages.

Further, the bill provides that for the State fiscal year starting on July 1, 2018, the BPU is to dedicate \$25 million from available balances collected through the societal benefits charge to provide grants to help pay the utility bills of households seeking temporary assistance from an assistance organization having the same qualifications as stated in the previous paragraph. Within one year after the BPU completes the disbursement of grant monies to the assistance organization, the assistance organization is to issue a report to the BPU providing the number of applicants applying for household utility assistance grants, the number of households receiving utility assistance grants, the average amount of assistance provided, the average gross income of households receiving assistance, the methods and procedures used for the verification of income or hardship, and any other information the BPU requires.

As reported, Senate Bill No. 2129 SCS is identical to Assembly Bill Nos. 3096 and 4049 ACS, which was substituted and also reported by the committee on this date.