

# SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### **SENATE, No. 2684**

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 17, 2019

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2684, with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill provides that retired law enforcement officers and retired firefighters are permitted to attend regularly-scheduled courses at public institutions of higher education or proprietary institutions which are licensed to confer academic degrees by the Secretary of Higher Education and receive up to 16 credits per semester tuition-free provided that:

- the officer or firefighter retired because of a disability pursuant to certain enumerated sections of State law or any substantially similar statute governing the disability retirement of federal law enforcement officers or firefighters;
- the retired officer or firefighter is enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student at the institution in good standing, or in a degree-granting program at a qualified proprietary institution in good standing; and
- the retired officer or firefighter has applied for all available federal and State student grants and scholarships for which the officer is eligible.

Under the bill, the State will reimburse an institution for the tuition of each eligible retired law enforcement officer and firefighter who enrolls in the institution to the extent that the tuition cost is not paid through federal and State student grants and scholarships.

Under section 21 of P.L.1999, c.46 (C.18A:62-24), members of the New Jersey National Guard are permitted to attend regularly-scheduled courses at a public institution of higher education and receive up to 16 credits per semester tuition-free. This bill models that law and provides similar tuition benefits to former law enforcement officers and firefighters who retired due to disability.

#### COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- 1) provide that firefighters who retired due to a disability will also be eligible for tuition benefits under the bill; and

2) include reference to the sections of law under which a member of the State Police may retire due to an ordinary or accidental disability.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that the bill would result in an indeterminate increase in State expenditures. The magnitude of the expenditure increase will depend on how many former law enforcement officers and firefighters, who have retired due to accidental or ordinary disability, decide each year to enroll for courses at a public institution of higher education or a proprietary institution licensed to confer academic degrees. The OLS is unable to project how many former law enforcement officers and firefighters, who have retired due to disability, will enroll for courses at a public institution of higher education or a proprietary institution. Additionally, the OLS is not able to estimate the amount of students' tuition costs that would remain, if any, after the application of federal and State tuition assistance for which the former police officers and firefighters may qualify.