

SENATE ECONOMIC GROWTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 850

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 11, 2020

The Senate Economic Growth Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 850 (1R).

As amended and reported, this bill establishes the “Broadband Access Study Commission” (commission). Under the bill, the commission is to evaluate impediments to broadband service access and to evaluate the feasibility of establishing community broadband networks in this State and is responsible for the following: 1) considering whether leasing or purchasing established broadband infrastructure, such as unused fiber optic cable, is more advantageous in creating a faster network; 2) considering whether establishing a community broadband municipal or county agency or a non-profit corporation is more appropriate to administer the community broadband network; 3) evaluating the different methods, including legislation and contracts with private companies, that other municipalities or counties in this country have used to implement community broadband networks; 4) determining the most cost effective method in which to establish community broadband networks, with a cost estimate for the local government and a rate estimate for paying customers; and 5) exploring all possible federal, State, and private funding sources for the establishment of community broadband networks in the State. Additionally, the commission is to evaluate impediments to broadband service access for all New Jersey residents.

The commission is to report its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature no later than one year following the first meeting of the commission. The commission is to expire upon the submission of the commission’s report.

The committee amended the bill to change the name of the commission, to edit the composition of the commission, include “broadband network” and “broadband service” as defined terms, and to include the evaluation of impediments to broadband service access as part of the commission’s duties.

As amended and reported, Assembly Bill No. 850 (1R) is identical to Senate Bill No. 2864, which was also reported and amended by the committee on this date.