

# ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### **ASSEMBLY, No. 394**

with committee amendments

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: FEBRUARY 15, 1996

The Assembly Community Services Committee favorably reports Assembly Bill No. 394 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes an Office of the Ombudsman for the Disabled, in, but not of, the Department of Health. The office shall serve as an advocate for individuals with disabilities when accessing public services, provide a voice for their needs and disseminate information to the public regarding the problems facing individuals with disabilities. The office shall also provide: outreach services in order to encourage greater access to services provided by government agencies for individuals with disabilities; referrals to appropriate social services and health care agencies throughout the State; assistance, as requested, in arranging health, social and rehabilitative services; representation in appealing the decisions of State agencies to deny appropriate services to certain individuals with disabilities; and the maintenance of a toll-free telephone number.

The bill also requires the office to report to the Governor and the Legislature by September 30 of each year. The report shall include: a summary of the office's activities for the preceding year; documentation of the significant problems which affect individuals with disabilities when accessing public services; an analysis of the trends in the systems of care and services for individuals with disabilities; and, any recommendations which will further the State's capacity in advocating for the rights of the disabled, including suggestions or recommendations for legislative consideration and for changes in the policy or rules and regulations of government agencies.

The amendments change the location of the office from the Department of the Public Advocate to the Department of Health, since the Department of the Public Advocate was abolished in 1995.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 1996-1997 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review which has been performed.