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ASSEMBLY LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 806

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 4, 1996

The Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 806 with committee amendments.

Assembly Bill No. 806 directs the Commissioner of Personnel to establish a 24-hour "Law Enforcement Officer Crisis Intervention Services" telephone hotline. The hotline would receive and respond to calls from law enforcement officers who have been involved in any event or incident which has produced personal or job-related depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, pressure, or disorder for the officer. The hotline operators are to seek to identify those officers who should be referred to further debriefing and counseling services, and to provide such referrals.

The hotline is to be established by the Commissioner of Personnel rather than a law enforcement agency in an effort to ensure that the names of the callers and the information exchanged will not be revealed to an officer's superiors or employer. The bill does provide, however, for the commissioner to establish guidelines to provide for the tracking of an officer who exhibits such a severe emotional or psychological disorder or condition that the operator taking the call reasonably believes might result in harm to the officer or to others.

In establishing the hotline, the commissioner is to consult with representatives from the New Jersey Association of Chiefs of Police, the New Jersey State Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, the New Jersey Corrections Officers Association, and other parties who can contribute to the development and operation of an effective program. The committee amended the bill to include the New Jersey Corrections Officers Association among those law enforcement associations to be consulted.

The bill also directs the commissioner to prepare a list of licensed or certified psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers; qualified counselors; and experienced former law enforcement officers who are

willing to participate in the program and provide debriefing and counseling services.

The committee also amended the bill to change the funding mechanism. As introduced, funding for the hotline was to come from the proceeds the Attorney General receives from the disposal of property forfeited by criminals. The committee amended the bill to provide that a \$0.50 surcharge be added to each motor vehicle fine or traffic violation penalty. The moneys generated through this surcharge are to be used to fund the hotline.

The committee also incorporated language to provide that those counties which decide to establish their own crisis intervention programs, pursuant to Assembly Bill No. 807, may impose an additional \$0.50 surcharge on each motor vehicle fine or traffic violation penalty occurring within that county to fund those programs.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 1996-97 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review which has been performed.