

FISCAL NOTE TO
ASSEMBLY, No. 1293
STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: AUGUST 21, 1996

Assembly Bill No. 1293 of 1996 eliminates commutation or "good time" credits for all persons committed to a State correctional institution for a crime of the first or second degree. It also would make award of commutation credits to all other inmates discretionary rather than mandatory.

The Department of Corrections states that eligibility for parole is currently one third of a maximum sentence, less credits which can further reduce the period of incarceration by 8 to 13 percent. With the removal of credits for "good time" and using averages developed from current admission information and terms of incarceration, the department estimates that there would be about 260 inmate admissions each year for the first degree crimes facing an additional length of stay of 14 months before becoming eligible for parole. Another 1,000 inmate admissions for second degree offenses would face an increased length of stay of 6 months. The department projects that over a period of 60 months (five years) it would require 800 additional bed spaces. Because the loss of time would not be felt until these inmates were to be paroled, the impact of this bill would not be felt until month 22, and continue growing until month 60 when these inmates would begin to be paroled. Thus, in the first year following enactment of this bill there would be no cost. During the second year, at an operating cost of \$26,000 per year per inmate, and a capital cost of \$80,000 per new bed space, the cost of this bill would be \$4 million. During years three, four and five costs would increase to \$25 million, \$32 million, and \$38 million, respectively.

The Office of Legislative Services adds that during year six, since there will be no further need to construct new bed spaces, the operating expenses would be reduced to \$21 million and remain fixed.

This fiscal note has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.