

ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2326

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 3, 1997

The Assembly Community Services Committee favorably reports Assembly Bill No. 2326 with amendments.

As amended by committee, this bill creates the Commission on the Status of Minorities. This two-year legislative study commission will be responsible for assessing the current status of social and economic opportunities available to ethnic and racial minorities of color. Social opportunities include, but are not limited to, opportunities to earn an equal education at all grade levels, opportunities to access publicly and privately-supported health and social services, opportunities to benefit from governmental efforts to promote and foster respect for diversity and multiculturalism and to eliminate discrimination and racism and opportunities to favorably interact with the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. Economic opportunities include, but are not limited to, opportunities to access public and private capital for small business development, opportunities to procure home mortgage financing and quality housing and equal opportunities to obtain employment in the public and private sectors.

The commission will have 20 members, four of whom will be legislative members and 16 of whom will be public members. Of the four legislative members, two shall be appointed by the President of the Senate from among its members thereof, not more than one of whom shall be of the same political party, and two shall be appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly from among its members thereof, not more than one of whom shall be of the same political party. The 16 public members shall be appointed as follows: four by the President of the Senate, one of whom shall be selected from a list submitted by the New Jersey Ethnic and Racial Alliance (NJERA); four by the Senate Minority Leader, one of whom shall be selected from a list submitted by the NJERA; four by the Speaker of the General Assembly, one of whom shall be selected from a list submitted by the NJERA; and four appointed by the Assembly Minority Leader, one of whom shall be selected from a list submitted by the NJERA. The percentage of public members of African-American and Latino descent shall approximate the percentage of African-Americans and

Latinos in the State. The percentage of public members of Asian and Native American descent shall exceed the percentage of Asians and Native Americans in the State due to their underrepresentation in the State.

In making its assessment of the status of minorities, the commission will have various duties. In the commission's first year, the members shall review current literature and statistical data on ethnic and racial minorities of color, interview experts, hire consultants, meet and hold hearings and catalogue and inventory existing public and private resources aimed at providing social and economic opportunities to the State's communities of color. In the commission's second year, the members shall create a comprehensive database of the information compiled in the first year. The database will be located at and managed by the Institute for Urban and Public Policy at Rowan College. The information will be made available to the public, to State and local governments and to nongovernmental organizations, particularly those representing the State's African American, Asian, Latino and Native American communities. The commission may issue interim reports as it deems necessary, but a final report containing its findings and recommendations regarding the status of minorities of color must be issued to the people of New Jersey before the expiration date. The commission shall expire two years from the date of the commission's first meeting.

The bill appropriates \$300,000 from the General Fund to the commission.

The amendments are technical in nature and correct inconsistencies in language in section 2 of the bill. The Assembly Community Services Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2326.