

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE TO

[Second Reprint]
ASSEMBLY, No. 2826

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 29, 1997

Assembly Bill No. 2826 (2R) of 1997 provides for the licensing of nutritionists and dietitians. The bill establishes a Nutritionists Examining Committee under the State Board of Medical Examiners in the Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Law and Public Safety to oversee their licensure. The committee is to consist of five licensed nutritionists and one physician.

The bill requires the committee to (1) review the qualifications of applicants for licensure; (2) adopt a code of ethics; (3) insure the proper conduct of examinations; (4) issue and renew biennial licenses; (5) suspend licenses where necessary; (6) establish a registry of nutritionists; (7) prescribe charges for examinations, licenses, renewals and other services it performs; (8) set the passing score for examinations; and (9) adopt standards for continuing education requirements. The committee would meet at least twice a year and members would be compensated and reimbursed for their expenses and provided with meeting and office facilities. Personnel necessary for the business of the committee would also be funded under the bill.

Under current law, the board also has the authority to charge fees for licenses and may assess civil penalties in addition or as an alternative to suspending or refusing to renew a license issued by it.

An informal estimate by the department indicates approximately 3,000 nutritionists and dietitians would be subject to provisions of the bill. The department estimates that the number of licensees will increase to 3,200 in the second year after the bill's enactment and 3,300 in the third year.

Based on the operating costs of similar licensing programs, the department estimates that the cost of the bill during the first year after enactment would total \$466,000. This figure includes \$168,000 for the salaries and fringe benefits of an executive director, administrative assistant, head clerk and audit clerk; \$6,000 for board salaries; \$39,000 for materials and supplies; \$18,000 for data processing; \$21,000 for travel, telephone, postage and other services; \$110,000 for legal and enforcement purposes; \$40,000 for administrative overhead; \$22,000 for maintenance; and \$42,000 for equipment. After adjusting for inflationary increases and certain one-time costs, the department estimates second and third-year costs to be \$394,000 and \$410,000, respectively.

The department estimates that nutritionists and dietitians subject to the provisions of this bill would be required to pay a \$125 initial

application fee and a \$150 biennial license fee to offset the administrative costs associated with the bill.

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) does not concur with this estimate. The division's estimate includes the position of a full-time executive director at a total salary and fringe benefit cost of \$63,500 in the first year. However, this bill was amended in committee to eliminate this position, while providing that the program have adequate personnel to conduct its business. The OLS estimate, therefore, removes this expenditure and includes, instead the salary and fringe benefit cost of a halftime administrator at \$32,000 in the first year. After this adjustment, the cost of this bill would be \$434,000, \$362,000 and \$378,000 in the first three years, respectively. Based on its reduced cost estimate, OLS estimates that the application and biennial license fees proposed by the department can be reduced by approximately 10 percent.

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