

FISCAL NOTE TO  
**SENATE, No. 1238**

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 30, 1996

Senate Bill No. 1238 of 1996 provides for the establishment of a new goal by the Department of Corrections to require a 40 hour workweek for most adult inmates. The objective would be for inmates who are of sufficient health, strength, and mental capacity to work at least five and up to six days a week, as prescribed by Department of Corrections rules and regulations. Time spent in work release or in academic or vocational training or other rehabilitation programs shall be credited toward the weekly work objective.

The Department of Corrections states that several factors currently hinder this initiative. Overcrowding and related security concerns limit the areas within the institution which could provide employment opportunities. Outside the institution, security would be the main concern.

The department further states that in the adult institutions, school placements (academic and vocational) are currently considered to be job placement for which inmate participants are paid in accordance with Departmental standards and institutional policy and procedures. System-wide, the only educational program which is not generally considered as a job assignment are those educational offerings, academic or vocational, which are operated in the evenings. Inmate participants in these programs generally have full time job assignments during the day and attend evening classes on a voluntary basis. At present, inmates are not paid to attend these evening sessions.

The department states that if participation in evening classes qualifies for compensation and the number of inmates and hours worked increases, a corresponding increase in the payment of inmate wages would occur. However, it is not possible to project the financial impact of the bill at this time.

The Office of Legislative Services concurs.

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