

SENATE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1712

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 27, 1997

The Senate Environment Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1712.

This bill appropriates \$22,825,000 from various bond acts to fund 80% matching grants for the acquisition of development easements on farmland, to fund 100% of the acquisition costs of development easements on farmland under certain emergency conditions, to provide 50% matching grants for soil and water conservation programs, and to provide moneys to cover the costs of implementing the "Agriculture Retention and Development Act." This bill also lists the farmland development easement projects to be funded in southern New Jersey. The northern New Jersey projects to be funded are listed in Senate Bill No. 1710 and Assembly Bill No. 328.

This bill would (1) appropriate \$15,284,000, and reappropriate \$2,788,000 (in unexpended balances from previous appropriations), from the "Green Acres, Clean Water, Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 1992," P.L.1992, c.88, and (2) reappropriate \$328,000 (in unexpended balances from previous appropriations), and appropriate \$2,675,000 (in interest earnings), from the "Open Space Preservation Bond Act of 1989," P.L.1989, c.183, for farmland preservation projects approved as eligible for funding pursuant to this bill with respect to such projects located in southern New Jersey and pursuant to a companion bill (Senate Bill No. 1710 of 1996 or Assembly Bill No. 328 of 1996) with respect to such projects located in northern New Jersey. Specifically, the sums appropriated or reappropriated would be utilized to: (1) provide grants to counties and municipalities for up to 80% of the cost of acquisition of development easements on farmland; and (2) provide for up to 100% of the cost of acquisition of development easements under such emergency conditions as the State Agriculture Development Committee determines, in accordance with the provisions of the bond acts.

This bill would also appropriate \$750,000 from the "Green Acres, Clean Water, Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 1992," P.L.1992, c.88, to provide grants to qualifying farmland owners for up to 50% of the cost of soil and water conservation projects. With respect to soil and water conservation grants, neither the 1992 bond act nor the 1995 bond act requires identification of the particular

projects to be funded by the appropriation bill; thus, the State Agriculture Development Committee would make the decisions with regard to which particular projects are to be funded with the monies appropriated by this bill for soil and water conservation grants.

Finally, the bill would also appropriate from the "Green Acres, Farmland and Historic Preservation, and Blue Acres Bond Act of 1995," P.L.1995, c.204, the sum of \$1 million to cover the costs, as defined in the bond act, incurred in implementing the "Agriculture Retention and Development Act," P.L.1983, c.32 (C.4:1C-11 et seq.), which is the major law concerned with the farmland preservation and development easement purchase program in the State.

Thus, the total sum appropriated or reappropriated from various farmland preservation bond funds pursuant to the bill would be \$22,825,000.

This bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 319.