

ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

**ASSEMBLY, No. 798**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: MARCH 8, 2021

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 798.

This bill authorizes the Local Committee on Alcohol Use Disorder and Substance Use Disorder in each county to establish a local drug overdose fatality review team for that county.

Under the bill, local drug overdose fatality review teams are to consist of individuals with experience and knowledge regarding health, social services, law enforcement, education, emergency medicine, mental health, juvenile delinquency, and drug and alcohol abuse.

The bill provides that each local drug overdose fatality review team is to: (1) develop methods to help prevent drug overdoses; (2) explore methods to promote cooperation among multi-disciplinary agencies in providing services to individuals with substance use disorders; (3) develop an understanding of the causes of drug overdoses; (4) recommend possible changes to law and policy to prevent drug overdoses; and (5) meet at least quarterly to review drug overdose cases submitted to the team, as well as available criminal, educational, substance abuse, and mental health records of the deceased individuals. Team meetings will be closed to the public, and information disclosed at the meetings will be confidential.

The bill requires the Commissioner of Health to develop a uniform, standardized reporting process for drug overdose deaths, and to forward certain information concerning each drug overdose death to the appropriate local drug overdose fatality review team, including certain personal details concerning the overdose victim and certain particulars concerning the circumstances of the overdose victim's death. Local drug overdose fatality review teams will also be provided with access to certain health treatment records and government records concerning the overdose victim. A local drug overdose fatality review team will be required to review each report of a drug overdose death upon receipt of the report.

The bill also directs State and local government agencies, upon request, to: (1) share records and information concerning an overdose victim with a drug overdose fatality review team, as necessary for the team to conduct a review of reported overdose

deaths; and (2) share records and information with the Department of Law and Public Safety, to be integrated into the department's integrated drug awareness dashboard.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.