

ASSEMBLY, No. 2117

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

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SYNOPSIS

Establishes State to oversee application for and receipt of federal funds
Ombudsman by State agencies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ACT** establishing the State Ombudsman for Federal Funds and
2 supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. a. There is created the Office of the Ombudsman for Federal
8 Funds within the Department of the Treasury. The purpose of the
9 office and the duties of the ombudsman shall be to serve as a
10 resource to enable State agencies to qualify for, apply for, and
11 receive federal funds, and to oversee the activities of State agencies
12 in this regard.

13 The ombudsman shall be appointed by the Governor with the
14 advice and consent of the Senate and shall serve at the pleasure of
15 the Governor during the Governor's term of office. Any vacancy
16 occurring in the position of ombudsman shall be filled in the same
17 manner as the original appointment. If the ombudsman shall be
18 unable for any reason to serve the full term of office, the Governor
19 shall designate an acting ombudsman until a successor is appointed
20 and has qualified.

21 The ombudsman shall be qualified by training and experience to
22 perform the duties of the office. The ombudsman shall be a person
23 of recognized judgment, integrity, and objectivity.

24 The ombudsman shall devote his entire time to the duties of the
25 office.

26 b. The ombudsman shall organize, administer, and direct the
27 work of the office, including the work of such professional and
28 clerical staff as may be necessary to carry out the duties. The
29 ombudsman shall be entitled to call upon and receive the services of
30 any full-time or part-time employee of any State department,
31 agency, board, bureau, or commission, as may be available to carry
32 out the duties. When existing State employees are not available, the
33 ombudsman shall hire such persons as deemed necessary and
34 appropriate, subject to Title 11A (Civil Service) of the New Jersey
35 Statutes and within the limits of funds made available to the office.
36 The ombudsman shall appoint and employ such officers,
37 investigators, experts, consultants, or other professionally qualified
38 personnel on a contract basis or otherwise as deemed necessary and
39 appropriate, in accordance with any applicable law, regulation, or
40 executive order, for the purpose of providing such professional
41 advice as the ombudsman may from time to time require, within the
42 limits of the funds made available therefor.

43 The ombudsman shall coordinate with State agencies and
44 implement a strategy for those State agencies to ensure that they
45 qualify and apply for and receive available federal funds in a timely
46 manner.

47 It shall be the duty of the ombudsman to:

1 serve as a source of information for federal funds available to the
2 State under federal laws and regulations;
3 provide information and support to State agencies in navigating
4 and understanding the process for obtaining federal funds;
5 review the processes of State agencies regarding the application
6 for federal funds and make recommendations;
7 identify the areas within State agencies that need to be
8 strengthened to qualify for federal funds;
9 evaluate, report on, and recommend strategies and best practices
10 to improve the ability of State agencies to qualify for and receive
11 federal funds;
12 establish procedures to monitor the application for and receipt of
13 all federal funds to State agencies;
14 promote and facilitate a coordinated approach for applications by
15 State agencies for federal funds;
16 promote State agencies to provide an opportunity for their
17 qualification for and receipt of federal funds;
18 develop productive relationships with the various State and
19 federal agencies to promote the success of State agencies in
20 receiving federal funds;
21 act as the contact person for State and federal agencies to support
22 and advocate on behalf of State agencies in qualifying and applying
23 for federal funds;
24 make information available to State and federal agencies to
25 improve access to federal funds by State agencies;
26 create and maintain an electronic system to track all federal
27 funding opportunities as they become available;
28 collaborate with the federal and State agencies to develop a
29 centralized database of available federal funds;
30 respond to inquiries from State and federal agencies regarding all
31 aspects of an application for and receipt of federal funds by the
32 State;
33 publish and disseminate information on the availability and
34 receipt of federal funds;
35 investigate whether applications for federal funds were submitted
36 appropriately and in accordance with relevant deadlines, laws, rules
37 and regulations and policies;
38 make necessary inquiries and obtain such information as deemed
39 necessary;
40 inspect any documents, forms, books, or records which are
41 relevant to an application and receipt of federal funds;
42 report to the Governor, the State Treasurer, and the Presiding
43 Officers of the Legislature any failure by a State agency to apply for
44 or receive in a timely manner any available federal funds; and
45 perform such other functions as the Governor or State Treasurer
46 shall direct or as the ombudsman may deem appropriate regarding
47 applications for and receipt of federal funds by the State.

1 c. The ombudsman shall establish a website describing the
2 functions of the office and ombudsman, and providing the mailing
3 address and the e-mail address of the office and ombudsman and a
4 toll-free information telephone number.

5 The ombudsman may publicize the existence, function, and
6 activities of the office to the public at large.

7 d. The ombudsman shall report to the Governor, and pursuant
8 to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) to the Legislature,
9 on or before January 31 of each year, summarizing the activities of
10 the office for the preceding year; documenting any significant
11 problems with regard to qualifying for, applying for, and receiving
12 federal funds or the applications therefor by State agencies; and
13 setting forth any recommendations for statutory or regulatory
14 change which will further the ability of the State to qualify for,
15 apply for, and receive federal funds.

16
17 2. This act shall take effect immediately.
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20 STATEMENT
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22 This bill establishes the Office of the Ombudsman for Federal
23 Funds within the Department of the Treasury. The purpose of the
24 office and the duties of the ombudsman will be to serve as a resource
25 to enable State agencies to qualify and apply for and receive federal
26 funds, and to oversee the activities of State agencies in this regard.

27 The ombudsman would be appointed by the Governor with the
28 advice and consent of the Senate to serve at the pleasure of the
29 Governor during the Governor's term of office.

30 The ombudsman must be qualified by training and experience to
31 perform the duties of the office, and be a person of recognized
32 judgment, integrity, and objectivity.

33 The bill specifies at length the duties of the ombudsman, and
34 requires annual reports to the Governor and the Legislature on the
35 activities of the ombudsman.