

ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO
ASSEMBLY, No. 4598

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 24, 2021

The Assembly Community Development and Affairs Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 4598.

As amended, this bill requires the Civil Service Commission to oversee the development and maintenance of a database, which would collect and track the background information received from a law enforcement agency of the State or a political subdivision of the State regarding candidates for the position of law enforcement officer. The database would include all background information received from all candidates and all threshold decisions made for selection or disqualification of candidates by participating law enforcement agencies. The database would exclude any personal identifying information to prevent compromising personal security and privacy and to ensure a non-biased process. The purpose of the database is to ensure that the commission would have all relevant information from all candidates to better understand the reasoning behind a candidate's selection or disqualification during the hiring process. The bill would also require the commission to develop a universal background application to be used by all law enforcement agencies. The information in the application would be used to uniformly fill in the fields of the database.

The bill requires the commission to develop universal guidelines and best practices for background investigations relating to thresholds for removal from the candidate list. The guidelines and best practices will include training for background investigations to better understand the challenges underrepresented groups disproportionately face. The purpose of the guidelines and best practices is to prevent a failure to adequately account for such challenges during the selection or disqualification process. The bill also requires the commission to switch to a paperless system concerning status updates to candidates and certification notifications. Candidates would also be permitted to submit responses electronically. Studies have shown that going to a paperless system has made hiring processes much easier and could help prevent exclusionary practices.

The bill also requires the Division of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action in the Civil Service Commission, in consultation with various national and State law enforcement agencies, to conduct a Statewide diversity analysis of the ethnic and racial make-up of all law enforcement agencies in the State. The division will submit a written report to the Governor and the Legislature one year after the effective date of the bill.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2767 (1R), which the committee also reported on this date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments remove a provision exempting information in the database from disclosure under the common law.