

ASSEMBLY SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5016

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 10, 2020

The Assembly Special Committee on Infrastructure and Natural Resources reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5016.

This bill would create a five-year Water Apprenticeship, Training, and Employment Resources ("WATER") Pilot Program in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) to provide grants to support funding for newly-established adult apprenticeship programs in the water infrastructure, water utilities, and other water-related sectors, focusing on underserved and underrepresented communities. Any organizational sponsor of an apprenticeship program would be eligible to receive a grant, including businesses, labor organizations, colleges, workforce training providers, and non-profit organizations, provided that they have secured an industry partner or a monetary or in-kind funding contribution.

Under the bill, grant applications would be accepted starting July 1, 2021, and the grants would be awarded no later than January 1, 2022. The DOLWD would rank eligible applicants for grants based upon each applicant's potential to reach a broad audience through its recruitment and outreach efforts, significantly increase enrollment and completion of the apprenticeship program, including among members of underserved and underrepresented communities, and fill existing needs for skilled workers in the market.

Beginning January 1, 2022, and each year thereafter for the duration of the pilot grant program, the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development would be required to submit to the Governor and the Legislature a report that evaluates the results of the program and its effectiveness.

In addition, the bill would create a special, non-lapsing fund in (to be known as the "WATER Fund") in the Department of the Treasury to collect and invest moneys to be used for the purposes of the bill. The bill also directs the Treasury to solicit grants from interested public or private sources for the fund.