

# ASSEMBLY COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO **ASSEMBLY, No. 5377**

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 5, 2021

The Assembly Commerce and Economic Development Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 5377.

This bill, as amended, would establish the “Food Innovation District Program” within the Division of Marketing and Development in the Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to encourage the development of food innovation districts within New Jersey. A food innovation district is a geographic concentration of food-oriented businesses, services, and community activities that are supported through planning and economic development initiatives in order to promote a positive business environment, spur regional food system development, and increase access to local food.

The division, in consultation with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Community Affairs, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, would identify criteria for the designation of food innovation districts. The bill specifies the criteria for a food innovation district designation to include, but not be limited to:

- accessibility to mass transportation facilities and services;
- zoning or a redevelopment plan that permits mixed-use development; and
- a cluster of interconnected food businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions.

The bill directs the division to establish an application form and procedure for municipalities to apply for designation of an area as a food innovation district. The bill would require an application to include, but would not be limited to:

- (1) the boundaries of the proposed food innovation district;
- (2) an inventory of existing and proposed food-oriented businesses; regional food hubs; community kitchens; farmers markets; warehousing, processing, distribution, and related facilities; and other food system infrastructure; and

(3) a plan for the development or redevelopment of the proposed food innovation district.

The bill directs the division to publicize the Food Innovation District Program, and provide links to the application form and procedure on its Internet website.

Under the bill, a municipality may apply to the division for designation of all or part of the municipality as a food innovation district. Two or more municipalities may jointly apply for designation of an area as a food innovation district. Within 60 calendar days of its receipt of a complete application for designation of an area as a food innovation district, the bill directs the division to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the application.

The bill directs the division, in consultation with the Department of Community Affairs and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, to adopt guidance and standards for municipalities to promote food innovation districts as places for businesses to locate. A municipality may advertise or otherwise use the food innovation district designation in accordance with the adopted guidance or standards.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments would provide for the establishment of the “Food Innovation District Program” to be within the Division of Marketing and Development in the Department of Agriculture rather than the Division of Food and Nutrition.