

ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5751

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 18, 2021

The Assembly Judiciary Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5751.

This bill requires that the core mission of State corrections officers to treat inmates with dignity, fairness, and respect be established and incorporated throughout both the basic and in-service training these officers are required to complete.

To implement this requirement, the basic training and in-service curriculum is to include training and education on the following topics: de-escalation, including training in interacting with combative or threatening inmates and inmates experiencing mental health crises; minimization of use of force against inmates; cultural diversity and implicit bias; appropriate methods of engaging with inmates of diverse cultures and religions and inmates who are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community and gender nonconforming inmates; the rights of inmates; lifestyle stressors, self-awareness, and self-regulation; officer and inmate safety; communication skills; and any other topic deemed necessary to advance the core mission of treating inmates with dignity, fairness, and respect.

Current law requires 20 hours of in-service training for State correctional police officers. Of these 20 hours, four hours of this mandatory training is required to cover sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment prevention as required by the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA); non-fraternization and undue familiarity; and conditioning and manipulation awareness. The remaining 16 hours is to be dedicated to topics chosen by the training department of each State correctional facility from a list of approved courses developed by the Department of Corrections. This bill increases the mandatory in-service training from 20 hours to 40 hours. The additional 20 hours are to be dedicated to the topics implementing the core mission as specified in the bill.

The bill also clarifies that passing a criminal history record background check is a qualification for employment as a State corrections officer.