

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5884

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 16, 2021

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5884 (1R), with committee amendments.

As amended by the committee, this bill establishes the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate in, but not of, the Economic Development Authority in the Department of the Treasury. The office will have the duty to: coordinate outreach for food insecurity programs, including developing new initiatives and outreach campaigns and identifying best practices to increase enrollment in the State's food insecurity programs; establish a 24-hour toll-free hunger hotline to assist in making information about the State's food insecurity programs as widely available as possible; support grant application processes related to food insecurity for in-state providers and State departments by monitoring available grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting with the grant application process; coordinate communication to and between food banks; establish best practices for food banks to reduce food waste and to distribute more fresh produce and proteins to food insecurity programs and food banks; collaborate with research organizations and universities to monitor ongoing gap analysis that identifies areas that are undeserved by current food insecurity programs; collaborate with State and community partners to develop a strategic plan to address identified gaps in areas that are undeserved by current food insecurity programs; oversee the development and implementation of public-private partnerships to address food insecurity; provide support in coordinating assistance to address food insecurity during federal or State-declared states of emergency; coordinate food insecurity programming and initiatives for institutions of higher education with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education; develop new initiatives, establish an outreach campaign, and identify best practices to reach senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable population; and coordinate outreach efforts for the newly unemployed who might be eligible for the food insecurity programs.

As amended, the bill defines “food insecurity program” as a nutrition program in this State that provides nutrition assistance to individuals without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food and includes, but is not limited to, the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children, the Commodity Supplemental Food program, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, the Child and Adult Care Program, and the United States Department of Agriculture’s school nutrition program.

The bill provides that the administrator and chief executive officer of the office will be the food insecurity advocate, who will be a person qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the office.

The food insecurity advocate will be appointed by the Governor and will serve at the pleasure of the Governor during the Governor's term of office and until the appointment and qualification of the food insecurity advocate's successor. The food insecurity advocate will administer and organize the work of the office and serve as the liaison between the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate and the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health, and Human Services.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amendments revise where the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate is to be allocated. As introduced, the office would be allocated in, but not of, the Department of the Treasury. As amended, the office would be allocated in, but not of, the Economic Development Authority in the Department of the Treasury.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that State expenditures from the General Fund will increase by an indeterminate amount to fund the creation of, and programs operated by, the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate. Expenditures related to the creation of this office, including salary costs for the chief executive officer and other staff, as well as programmatic costs, will increase Department of the Treasury costs, to the extent that the office will be in, but not of, the department, and the department will have no supervision over the activities of this independent office.

To the extent that the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate, by identifying new food insecurity grant opportunities and assisting State departments and in-state providers with securing new funding sources, is able to attract additional federal and private funding in support of food insecurity programs in the State, State costs may be somewhat reduced in future fiscal years.