

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, No. 4102**

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 6, 2022

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 4102 (SCS), with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes a career development program for direct support professionals by the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development and makes an appropriation of \$1,000,000 for the bill's purposes.

This bill directs the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development to establish the Direct Support Professional Career Development Program at one of its Centers for Workforce Innovation as part of the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative. Under the bill, the program will also establish two additional program sites, one located at a county college in the northern region of the State, and one located at a county college in the southern region of the State. The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, will select the location for the program's additional sites.

The program will be guided by an advisory council that includes representatives from target school districts, county colleges, and One Stop Career Centers, and representatives from each of the following stakeholder groups: people with disabilities, family members of people with disabilities, direct support professionals, frontline supervisors, and service provider leadership. The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the President of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, will appoint the members of the advisory council. The advisory council will work in partnership with the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services and the Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

The purpose of the program will be to provide a potential career path to individuals interested in human services and allied health career fields in addition to existing direct support professionals (DSPs), thereby assisting with recruitment and retention of this critical workforce.

The bill provides that the program, through partnerships with local school districts, county colleges, and One Stop Career Centers, will identify and recruit individuals who are interested in learning about and serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program will provide participating students with a one-year fellowship program that offers mentorship and training regarding the responsibilities of DSPs and a potential job opportunity upon graduation. The program will provide online training in addition to on-site training and mentorship with experienced DSPs employed by collaborating agencies that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In addition to students, the Direct Support Professional Career Development Program will work with existing and potential DSPs to identify their educational goals including credentialing, an associate's degree and a bachelor's degree.

The bill requires the Direct Support Professional Career Development Program, and each additional program site, to provide career counseling which will provide ongoing support to participating students as well as direct support professionals, including providing the student with assistance in finding appropriate postsecondary programs, support with completion of the Direct Support Professional Career Development Pathway, or in connecting the student with a provider agency that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In collaboration with the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services and entities focused on promoting the self-determination and full participation of people with disabilities, the Center of Workforce Innovation, and each additional program site, is required to implement a competency-based Direct Support Professional Career Development Pathway, in alignment with the Money Follows the Person Direct Support Professional Capacity Building effort and develop curriculum specific to the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities including a certificate, associates' degree, and bachelors' degree.

Under the bill, the Career Development Pathway will assist individuals employed as a direct support professional increase their skills, achieve competency in the field, and as part of the certificate program, earn fully transferable course credit applicable toward an associate's degree in a human service or relevant healthcare field at any county college.

Finally, the bill provides for the appropriation of \$1,000,000 from the General Fund to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for the purposes of fulfilling the bill's provisions. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will distribute a grant to the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development Program at a Center for Workforce Innovation, and at the program's additional sites, distribute fellowship funding to cover

living expenses for participating individuals, and establish a fund for existing direct support professionals to cover costs associated with furthering their education. Under the bill, no more than 10 percent of the funds appropriated will be used for administrative expenses, and the secretary is required to approve any budget.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No.6230, which was also amended and reported by the committee on this date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- Change the name of the Direct Support Professional Career Development Center to the Direct Support Professional Career Development Program;
- Specify that the program will focus on the recruitment of high school or county college students, but may also be open to individuals pursuing a change in career, and oversee implementation of one-year paid fellowship opportunities. In its original form, the program focused on the recruitment of students “at-risk” of not graduating high school;
- Provide that the program will be established by the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development at one of its Centers for Workforce Innovation as part of the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative;
- Provide that the program will have two additional program sites, one located at a county college in the northern region of the State, and one located at a county college in the southern region of the State. The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, will select the location for the program’s additional sites;
- Provide that the program, in addition to local school districts, will partner with county colleges and One Stop Career Centers;
- Change the two-year mentorship and training program to a one-year fellowship program that offers mentorship and training;
- Eliminate the provision that: (1) upon completion of the program, a participating student would receive academic credits and the school district at which the student is enrolled would apply the credits towards the district requirements for high school graduation; and (2) the student would be offered an opportunity to interview for employment as a direct support professional at the agency where the student received on-site training;
- Provide that the program will collaborate with local One Stop Career Centers to provide opportunities for unemployed and

underemployed workers to receive training to pursue employment in the field of Direct Support;

- Specify that, in collaboration with the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services and entities focused on promoting the self-determination and full participation of people with disabilities, the Center of Workforce Innovation, and each additional program site, is required to implement a competency-based Direct Support Professional Career Development Pathway, in alignment with the Money Follows the Person Direct Support Professional Capacity Building effort and develop curriculum specific to the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities including a certificate, associates' degree, and bachelors' degree;
- Specify that the Career Development Pathway will assist individuals employed as a direct support professional increase their skills, achieve competency in the field, and as part of the certificate program, earn fully transferable course credit applicable toward an associate's degree in a human service or relevant healthcare field at any county college;
- Increase the appropriation from \$450,000 to \$1,000,000;
- Provide that the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will distribute a grant to the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development Program at a Center for Workforce Innovation, and at the program's additional sites, distribute fellowship funding to cover living expenses for participating individuals, and establish a fund for existing direct support professionals to cover costs associated with furthering their education; and
- Specify that no more than 10 percent of the funds appropriated pursuant to the bill will be used for administrative expenses, and that the secretary is required to approve any budget.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fiscal information for this bill is currently unavailable.