

ASSEMBLY SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 672

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 10, 2022

The Assembly Special Committee on Infrastructure and Natural Resources reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 672.

As amended by the committee, 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, including a business, labor organization, college or university, workforce training provider, non-profit organization, public utility, local government entity or authority, or trade organization, would be eligible to receive a grant, provided that they have secured an industry partner or a monetary or in-kind funding contribution.

The DOLWD will be required to begin accepting grant applications, under the program, not more than six months after the effective date of this bill, and initial grant awards are to be issued no later than one year after the bill’s effective date. The DOLWD would be required to rank eligible applicants for grants based upon each applicant’s potential to: (1) reach a broad audience through its recruitment and outreach efforts; (2) significantly increase enrollment in, and the completion of, the apprenticeship program, including among members of underserved and underrepresented communities; and (3) fill existing needs for skilled workers in the market.

One year after the bill’s effective date, 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 WATER Pilot Program and its effectiveness.

The bill would create a special, non-lapsing fund in the Department of the Treasury, which would be known as the “WATER Fund,” and which would be used to collect and invest moneys for the

purposes of the bill. The bill would also direct the Department of the Treasury to solicit grants and donations to the fund from interested public or private sources.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2022-2023 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to make various technical and clarifying changes, including changes to:

- (1) update outdated dates;
- (2) ensure that the pilot program's correct title is used throughout the bill;
- (3) ensure that the bill conforms with modern standards of drafting, including with respect to the proper use of subdivisions and list formats;
- (4) clarify that the bill is supplementing Title 34 of the Revised Statutes;
- (5) amend the provisions of section 1 that would have required an eligible applicant to partner with other entities for marketing purposes, strengthen local hiring preferences, and hold an annual water summit, in order to clarify that those requirements are applicable to applicants who actually receive a grant under the pilot program;
- (6) move the existing definitions so that they appear at the front of the bill, and incorporate two new clarifying definitions of the terms "program participant" (or "participant") and "WATER Pilot Program" (or "program"); and
- (7) add clarifying language and make technical changes to ensure the use of correct sentence structure and grammar throughout the bill.