

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR
CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1749

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 6, 2022

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1749.

This bill would require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to authorize a student of higher education who is the recipient of an award from the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund to obtain nutrition assistance benefits under the State's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), regardless of whether the student satisfies the 20 hour weekly work requirement, established by federal law at 7 CFR 273.5(b)(5), which is ordinarily required for students of higher education to participate in SNAP. The Educational Opportunity Fund provides financial assistance to needy students, in order to enable them to attend institutions of higher education.

Because SNAP was established pursuant to federal law, and because the program is subject to compliance with certain minimum federally-established work requirements and eligibility criteria, the bill's relaxation of work requirements for Educational Opportunity Fund award recipients will not take effect until such time as the federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves the change in, and authorizes a waiver of, existing federal student work requirements for the students identified in the bill.

The bill would require the Commissioner of Human Services, within 90 days after the effective date of the bill, to: 1) apply to the FNS to secure any appropriate federal approvals or waivers that may be necessary to implement and enforce the provisions of the bill; and 2) take any additional action as may be necessary to ensure that the State's implementation of the bill is undertaken in compliance with all applicable provisions of federal and State law.

Following the receipt of the necessary federal approvals and waivers, the DHS will be required to implement and enforce the expanded SNAP eligibility requirements for Educational Opportunity Fund award recipients. In so doing, the DHS will be required to institute a public awareness campaign that is designed to inform high school seniors and students of higher education about the new SNAP eligibility criteria applicable to these award recipients.