SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2429

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: NOVEMBER 30, 2023

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 2429.

As amended by the committee, this bill creates a Code Red alert pilot program modeled on the Code Blue alert and plans under current law.

The bill requires the establishment of a three-year pilot program to provide for the coordination, by a county office of emergency management, of emergency services rendered by municipal governments, social service agencies, and certain non-profit organizations to the homeless during harsh hot weather conditions. The bill defines an at-risk individual as an individual living outdoors or in poorly insulated settings who is at risk for weather-related exposure and possible death.

The bill would require the Code Red alert plans throughout the county include communication and outreach to at-risk individuals, as well as transportation during the implementation of a Code Red alert plan.

The bill requires a county office of emergency management, or other appropriate county office, agency, or department, to coordinate with municipal emergency management coordinators in municipalities with a documented homeless population of at least 10 persons, to develop consistent Code Red alert plans throughout the county that provide emergency cooling centers during implementation of a Code Red alert.

The bill requires the State Office of Emergency Management (State office) to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature on the success of the pilot program, and recommend whether or not to make the program permanent. The State office may request information needed for the development and compilation of this report from each appropriate county office. Following the conclusion of the pilot program, the bill permits a county governing body to certify and submit a request for a reimbursement for the administrative costs of

the pilot program to the State office, and the bill requires the State office to reimburse the county for those certified costs.

The bill makes the county emergency management coordinator responsible for monitoring National Weather Service weather forecasts and issuing a Code Red alert during the time of the pilot program if:

1) the heat index is forecast to reach 95 degrees Fahrenheit to 99 degrees Fahrenheit for at least two consecutive days; or

2) the temperatures will reach 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more for any length of time.

The issuance of an alert will trigger implementation of the county Code Red alert plan, including the provision of emergency cooling centers for at-risk individuals. These cooling centers may be provided by designated volunteer organizations that would receive planning support from the county but operate autonomously in response to an alert.

The bill provides "Good Samaritan" protection from civil liability to the State, a political subdivision, and their agents and employees, as well as to volunteer organizations and their members and volunteers who, during the implementation of a Code Red alert plan, provide emergency cooling centers to at-risk individuals.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments revise the bill to establish Code Red alert and plans as a three-year pilot program. As introduced, the bill would have established Code Red alert and plans in perpetuity.

The committee amendments require the State Office of Emergency Management (State office) to submit a report on the pilot program and authorize the State office to request the necessary information for the report from county offices.

The committee amendments authorize a county governing body to certify and submit a request for a reimbursement for the administrative costs of the pilot program to the State office. The committee amendments require the State office to reimburse the county for those certified costs.

The committee amendments revise the title and synopsis of the bill to reflect these changes.