

# SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### **SENATE, No. 2807**

with committee amendments

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: JUNE 16, 2022

The Senate Environment and Energy Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 2807, with committee amendments.

This bill, as amended, would establish a Liberty State Park Design Task Force within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The task force would have 17 members, as enumerated in subsection c. of section 4 of the bill. The task force would be charged with assisting the DEP in developing:

(1) short-term action items designed to improve public use and enjoyment of conservation and recreation areas within the Liberty State Park; and

(2) a long-term master plan that (a) improves park facilities, programs and amenities, (b) creates new transportation and mobility services to the park to ensure equal access for all community residents to the park and within the park, and (c) further preserves the park's natural resources and wildlife and protects against climate change.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the task force would be required to give due consideration to the natural, historic, cultural, recreational, economic and scenic resources, and the local, State, and national significance of Liberty State Park. The task force would also: (1) reflect the diversity of the Hudson County and the Jersey City community; (2) give due consideration to the creation of recreational, cultural, and economic opportunities and access to the park for all residents; and (3) consider how the local community, especially minority and local small business owners can participate and benefit from the improved park.

The bill would direct the task force to present the DEP with immediate action items designed to improve conservation and recreational opportunities in Liberty State Park, including immediate plans to address:

(1) the need for environmental justice and social equity to ensure equal access to the park for public use and enjoyment of conservation areas, open space, and recreational areas;

(2) the preservation of natural resources through a resiliency plan that allows the park to withstand rising sea levels and future flooding;

(3) wildlife management and habitat restoration planning for the protection of native and endangered species and migratory birds;

(4) transportation and mobility planning to improve access for all community residents to the park and within the park;

(5) upgrades to park facilities, programs, and amenities, and the development of new recreational and athletic facilities suitable for all age groups, provided that the task force would not recommend the construction of a casino in the park and that any recommendation for the construction of renewable energy facilities is limited to rooftops and parking areas; and

(6) cultural and arts opportunities in the park.

The bill would also direct the task force, no later than six months after the bill is enacted into law, and after holding at least three public meetings at which members of the public may participate and submit written comments, to submit to the DEP, after consideration of the public comments, a master plan that outlines long-term plans and capital projects designed to address the aforementioned issues and provide for the continued maintenance of the park.

Lastly, the bill would appropriate \$250 million from the General Fund to the DEP to support activities identified by the Liberty State Park Design Task Force to improve recreational activities and maintain and upgrade scenic and wildlife habitats and areas at Liberty State Park.

The committee amendments to the bill:

(1) remove a requirement that the master plan developed by the task force include plans for the DEP to generate revenue and other funds, donations, or endowments to ensure adequate reserve funds for the ongoing and future maintenance of the park;

(2) provide that the task force would not recommend the construction of a casino in the park and that any recommendation for the construction of renewable energy facilities made by the task force would be limited to rooftops and parking areas;

(3) require the task force to hold at least three public meetings at which members of the public may participate and submit written comments, which the task force is required to consider prior to submitting the master plan to the DEP; and

(4) correct a typographical error in the bill's text.