

# SENATE COMMUNITY AND URBAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### SENATE, No. 3445

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 8, 2023

The Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3445.

This bill requires the Director of the Division of Housing and Community Resources (director) in the Department of Community Affairs to establish a competitive grant program to encourage municipalities to develop recreational sports and athletic programs and STEM programs for children. The bill provides that the STEM programs are to be youth-based, recreational programs that focus on creative, age-appropriate, and entertaining activities, including but not limited to: robot-building; 3D printing toys; and Lego programs. Under the bill, to participate in the grant program, the governing body of a municipality is required to submit an application to the Division of Housing and Community Resources (division) with information detailing the municipality's proposed plans for the grant funding, as described in the bill.

Under the bill, after reviewing the applications, the director is to select municipalities in each of the northern, southern, and central regions of the State, to participate in the program and is required to seek a cross section from urban, suburban, and rural areas of the State. The director is required to develop a list of municipal costs that are eligible for matching grant funds that include, but are not limited to: sports and athletics equipment; field and equipment maintenance; insurance; lighting; a salary for the program supervisor; volunteer training; and any other costs the director deems appropriate.

Within one year of receiving a grant, each participating municipality is required to submit a report to the director, which is to include certain details provided in the bill.

The bill requires the director to compile the reports submitted for inclusion in a comparative profile of the participating municipalities and to post the profile for public inspection on the division's Internet website in an easily accessible location. The bill further requires the director to report to the Governor and the Legislature on the grant program.

The bill specifies that, notwithstanding the provisions of any Green Acres program for the purchase of land for recreation and conservation purposes, any Green Acres bond act, and provisions of the Garden State Preservation Trust Act, a municipality may not charge a participation fee for any person participating in a recreational sports

and athletic program or STEM program for local children established pursuant to this bill. However, the bill specifies that the director may establish a list of premium services for which the municipality may charge a specialty fee, including, but not limited to, use of: a scoreboard; a public address system; or nighttime lighting of fields.