

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 709

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 7, 2023

The Senate Judiciary Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 709.

This bill, as amended, would upgrade any simple assault committed against a sports official for a school- or community-sponsored youth sports event to an aggravated assault under the following circumstances: the person is clearly identifiable as being engaged in the performance of the duties of a sports official; or because of the person's status as a sports official. The bill defines "sports official" as meaning "any person who serves as a referee, umpire, timer, scorer, coach, athletic trainer, manager, or assistant . . . , or serves in a similar capacity but may be known by a different title, whether the person is compensated or a volunteer."

Any such simple assault committed against a sports official, graded under current law as a disorderly persons offense, would be upgraded to a crime of the fourth degree if the official suffered no bodily injury, and upgraded to a crime of the third degree if bodily injury occurred. A crime of the fourth degree is potentially punishable by a term of imprisonment of up to 18 months, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. A crime of the third degree is potentially punishable by a term of imprisonment of three to five years, a fine of up to \$15,000, or both. By way of comparison, a simple assault disorderly persons offense is potentially punishable by a term of imprisonment of up to six months, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

The changes to the law would take effect on the first day of the fourth month next following enactment. As introduced, the changes would have taken effect immediately.

The bill, as amended and reported by the committee, is identical to the First Reprint of the Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill Nos. 4444 and 4471, also amended and reported today by the committee.

This bill was prefiled 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.

The committee amendments to the bill:

- change the bill's scope to only upgrade simple assaults against sports officials for a school- or community-sponsored youth sports event;

- expand the definition of "sports official" to include a "timer, scorer, coach, athletic trainer, manager, or assistant," or a person who "serves in a similar capacity but may be known by a different title," and expressly apply the definition to persons whether or not they are compensated;

- revise the effective date to be the first day of the fourth month next following enactment; and

- update the bill's title to match the title of the identical Assembly counterpart, the First Reprint of the Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill Nos. 4444 and 4471.