

ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 678

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 15, 2023

The Assembly Judiciary Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 678.

This bill authorizes the Victims of Crime Compensation Office (VCCO) to pay expenses related to protecting the safety of cooperating witnesses. The bill defines a “cooperating witness” as a witness who testifies for the government to help prosecute a crime, and includes a confidential informant.

The bill also authorizes the Division of Criminal Justice in the Department of Law and Public Safety (DLPS) to award grants from the Victim and Witness Advocacy Fund to public entities and not-for-profit organizations to provide services that protect the safety of cooperating witnesses.

Finally, the bill amends the Crime Victim’s Bill of Rights to expand the rights of cooperating witnesses. The bill gives these witnesses the right to be provided assistance before and during trial to cope with the psychological and practical obstacles of testifying. These witnesses also would be given the right to receive protective measures before, during, and after a hearing or trial and to have established court procedures ensuring their safety while testifying.

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.