

ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2410

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 18, 2023

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2410.

This bill would require the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the Department of Human Services to establish and oversee a public awareness campaign that would be known as the “Heroin and Opioid Drug Public Education (HOPE) Initiative.” The HOPE Initiative would be designed to combat the growing heroin and opioid epidemic in this State by educating the public about the dangers and causes of heroin and opioid addiction, and the appropriate responses thereto.

The bill would require the division to work in consultation with the Governor’s Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey, and, as appropriate, the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, in developing, coordinating, implementing, and overseeing the HOPE Initiative.

The HOPE Initiative would provide for the coordinated and widespread public dissemination of individual case stories and other generalized information as provided in the bill.

The information to be provided through the HOPE Initiative would be disseminated using every available type of media, including print media, television and radio, Internet and social media, billboards, and non-traditional media, such as milk cartons and water bottles. In addition, the division would be required to employ a variety of complementary educational themes and messages, which would be tailored to appeal to different target audiences in the State. At a minimum, the initiative would be required to incorporate: (1) at least one message that is directed at, and is tailored to influence and resonate with, individuals who are personally at risk of heroin use or opioid abuse, or who have already started down a pathway to addiction; and (2) at least one message that is directed at, and is tailored to influence and resonate with, other individuals, such as the family members and friends of addicted persons, as well as teachers, school nurses, medical practitioners, and employers.

The bill would require information under the HOPE Initiative to be disseminated using culturally and linguistically appropriate means, in a manner that demonstrates respect for individual dignity and cultural differences.

On at least an annual basis, the division would be required to convene at least one focus group and conduct a survey of households in the State, in order to gauge the effectiveness of the initiative. Within 120 days after the completion of the annual focus group meeting and household survey, the division would be required to take appropriate action, as needed, to refine or improve the HOPE Initiative, such as by revising the educational themes and messages that are employed thereunder, in order to ensure that the initiative has the greatest positive impact on each target audience in the State.