

ASSEMBLY HOUSING COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR

ASSEMBLY, No. 3540

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 18, 2023

The Assembly Housing Committee reports favorably an Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill No. 3540.

This Assembly Committee Substitute creates a Code Red alert pilot program modeled on the Code Blue alert and plans under current law.

The bill requires the establishment of a three-year pilot program to provide for coordination, by a county office of emergency management, of emergency services rendered by municipal governments, social service agencies, and certain non-profit organizations to the homeless during harsh hot weather conditions. The bill defines an at-risk individual as an individual living outdoors or in poorly insulated settings who is at risk for weather-related exposure and possible death.

The bill would require the Code Red alert plans throughout the county include communication and outreach to at-risk individuals, as well as transportation during the implementation of a Code Red alert plan.

The bill requires a county office of emergency management, or other appropriate county office, agency, or department, to coordinate with municipal emergency management coordinators in municipalities with a documented homeless population of at least 10 persons, to develop consistent Code Red alert plans throughout the county that provide emergency cooling centers during implementation of a Code Red alert.

The bill requires the State Office of Emergency Management (State office) to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature, to report on the success of the pilot program, and recommend whether or not to make program permanent. The State office may request information needed for development and compilation of this report from each appropriate county office. Following the conclusion of the pilot program, the bill permits a county governing body to certify and submit a request for a reimbursement for the administrative costs of the pilot program to the State office, and the bill requires the State office to reimburse the county for those certified costs.

The bill makes the county emergency management coordinator responsible for monitoring National Weather Service weather

forecasts, and requires issuance of a Code Red alert during the time of the pilot program if:

- 1) the heat index is forecast to reach 95 degrees Fahrenheit to 99 degrees Fahrenheit for at least two consecutive days; or
- 2) the temperatures will reach 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more for any length of time.

The issuance of an alert will trigger implementation of the county Code Red alert plan, including the provision of emergency cooling centers for at-risk individuals. These cooling centers may be provided by designated volunteer organizations that would receive planning support from the county but operate autonomously in response to an alert.

The bill provides “Good Samaritan” protection from civil liability to the State, a political subdivision, and their agents and employees, as well as to volunteer organizations and their members and volunteers who, during implementation of a Code Red alert plan, provide emergency cooling centers to at-risk individuals.