

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 4250

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 4, 2024

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 4250.

As amended and reported by the committee, Senate Bill No. 4250 designates the “Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act,” which establishes the Community Crisis Response Advisory Council and a pilot program to permit municipalities and community-based organizations to operate community crisis response teams. Under the bill, the act will be known and may be cited as the “Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act.”

The bill establishes the council in the Department of Law and Public Safety to provide the department with best practices and recommendations concerning the development of a community crisis response program. Under the bill, the council would consist of 13 members, as follows:

(1) the Deputy Commissioner of Public Health Services, the Assistant Commissioner of the Division of HIV, STD and TB Services, and the Director of Emergency Medical Services in the Department of Health, or their designees, serving ex officio;

(2) the Attorney General or a designee, serving ex officio;

(3) the Executive Director of the Division of Violence Intervention and Victim Assistance in the Department of Law and Public Safety, or a designee, serving ex officio;

(4) the Director of the Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Community Affairs, or a designee, servicing ex officio; and

(5) seven public members of the council to be appointed by the Governor, with two members appointed upon recommendation of the Senate President and two members appointed upon recommendation of the Speaker of the General Assembly.

The seven public members would consist of one or more members who: have prior involvement with the criminal justice system; have expertise in crisis response, harm reduction services, or both; have experience advocating for their communities; and represent New Jersey-based social justice and civil rights organizations specializing in criminal justice reform.

The bill requires the Attorney General to establish a pilot program in Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, and Passaic Counties to permit eligible municipalities and community-based organizations to operate community crisis response teams. Under the bill, a community crisis response team is defined as a team that provides professional on-site community-based intervention such as outreach, de-escalation, stabilization, resource connection, and follow-up support for individuals who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis, including certified peer counselors as a best practice to the extent practicable. The Attorney General is required to develop a grant program for eligible municipalities and community-based organizations, awarding up to \$2 million per eligible applicant annually.

To be eligible to receive a grant pursuant to the pilot program:

(1) a municipality is required to be a municipality of the first class in Essex, Hudson, and Passaic Counties, a municipality of the second class having a population of more than 70,000 and density of 8,000 to 12,000 according to the 2020 federal decennial census in Camden and Mercer counties, and a municipality of the second class having a population of more than 55,000 and density of between 10,000 and 11,000 according to the 2020 federal decennial census in Middlesex County; and

(2) a community-based organization is required to be located in a municipality that meets the eligibility criteria.

Additionally, an applicant is required to demonstrate an established relationship with a State-approved harm reduction center or reliable access to other harm reduction services. The department would be required to prioritize issuing grants to applicants that currently operate as a violence interrupter community street team and have been State-approved for not less than two years.

The bill requires the council to submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on the status of the pilot program. Three years following the date of enactment the council would be required to submit a final report to the Governor and the Legislature on the outcomes resulting from the pilot program and recommendations for the actions necessary to support the continuation and expansion of community crisis response models in the State of New Jersey.

The bill appropriates \$12 million and provides that grants awarded under the pilot program to applicants in each eligible municipality are not to exceed \$2 million per municipality.

As amended and reported by the committee, Senate Bill No. 4250 is identical to Assembly Bill No. 5326 (1R), which was also amended and reported by the committee on this date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments:

(1) provide that the act will be known and cited as the “Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act”;

(2) define “violence interrupter community street team” as a non-profit community service provider who develops and implements violence intervention and prevention programming for communities impacted by higher-than-average rates of violence, with a focus on gun violence, and works with groups and individuals to build their capacity to seek healthy methods for addressing and resolving conflict;

(3) provide that the Community Crisis Response Advisory Council will be established in the Department of Law and Public Safety. As introduced, the council was to be established in the Department of Health;

(4) require that the best practices and recommendations to be developed by the council are to include an assessment and determination of a viable pipeline to train and resource mental health screeners from within directly impacted communities;

(5) add Hudson County as a county in which a pilot program will be established to effectuate the purposes of the bill;

(6) provide that an eligible municipality in Hudson County will be one that is a city of the first class;

(7) provide that an applicant is required to demonstrate an established relationship with a State-approved harm reduction center, be a State-approved community violence intervention program, or both. As introduced, the bill required an applicant to demonstrate an established relationship with a State-approved harm reduction center or reliable access to other harm reductions services;

(8) provide that the interim and final reports will be issued by the council. As introduced, the reports were to be issued by the Commissioner of Health;

(9) appropriate \$12 million. As introduced, the bill appropriated \$10 million to effectuate its purposes; and

(10) make technical changes.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services determines that State costs will increase by up to \$12 million under the bill in the first three years following enactment to support a pilot grant program within the Department of Law and Public Safety to help certain municipalities and community-based organizations operate community crisis response teams. The bill appropriates \$12 million to the department to provide these grants and also to support the activities and staffing of the newly-created Community Crisis Response Advisory Council. The department is to provide the administrative support to the council. Municipalities participating in the pilot program will

experience revenue increases during the three-year pilot program in the form of State grants. The \$12 million State appropriation is to support both the grant program and the administrative costs of the council, so the total amount of grant awards that would be provided to municipalities is the appropriated amount less these administrative expenses and any grants given to community-based organizations.