

ASSEMBLY SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO
ASSEMBLY, No. 1497

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 16, 2024

The Assembly Science, Innovation and Technology Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1497.

As amended and reported, this bill removes a requirement of law that limits the types of broadband telecommunications services, also known as wireless Internet service, that may be provided by a local unit. Specifically, the bill provides that local units would no longer be required to provide broadband telecommunications service through a wireless community network. By removing the requirement for broadband telecommunications service to be provided via wireless community networks, this bill would authorize a local unit to provide broadband telecommunications service in any manner that the local unit deems necessary, provided that the local unit otherwise complies with the requirements of State and federal law.

Under current law, a local unit such as a county, municipality, or other local entity is permitted to: (1) establish a related competitive business segment to: (i) construct, own, or operate broadband telecommunications infrastructure for the provision of broadband telecommunications service via a wireless community network; or (ii) provide broadband telecommunications service via a wireless community network; or (2) enter into a contract with a private entity to: (i) provide broadband telecommunications service via a wireless community network; or (ii) construct, own, use, acquire, deliver, grant, operate, maintain, sell, purchase, lease, or equip broadband telecommunications infrastructure for the provision of broadband telecommunications service via a wireless community network. Pursuant to current law, local units are also permitted to issue revenue bonds and to pay for all or part of the costs of the infrastructure used for these purposes.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As amended and reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

These committee amendments:

(1) remove a provision of law that prohibits State agencies that assist in project financing from financing the costs of constructing, operating or maintaining any broadband telecommunications infrastructure used for the purpose of providing broadband telecommunications service via a wireless community network, if such network is offered commercially to the public; and

(2) makes a technical change.