SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

# SENATE, No. 1059

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 16, 2024

The Senate Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1059.

Due to the nature of law enforcement work, with its associated risks, danger, and stress, law enforcement officers face a high probability of developing post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses. Law enforcement officers commonly feel that disclosure of mental illness will result in negative professional consequences up to and including job loss, creating a culture in which officers often do not divulge mental health struggles and do not seek appropriate and necessary treatment. Family members of law enforcement officers often face unique stressors related to their loved ones' employment and may have an elevated need for mental health services.

To address these concerns, the bill establishes the Law Enforcement Critical Mental Health Assistance Grant Program in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the program is to award grants to mental health providers to provide confidential mental health services to law enforcement officers or family members of the law enforcement officers who are in a mental health crisis or suicidal.

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Human Services is required to develop an application by which a mental health provider may apply for a grant for funding to provide mental health services pursuant to the provisions of the bill. The commissioner is required to establish selection criteria for the awarding of grants under the program. The bill provides that consideration is to be given to the geographical location of mental health providers and the areas where they provide services in order to facilitate patients traveling less than one hour to receive mental health services, to the greatest extent possible.

Under the bill, the commissioner is to provide notice of the availability of funding for this program and make the application available on the department's Internet website. Upon receipt of an application, the commissioner is required to review the application and, subject to the availability of funds, award a grant to each approved grant applicant. Additionally, under the bill, the commissioner is required to publish a list of approved mental health providers on the department's Internet website.

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