

SENATE, No. 2190

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 221st LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes ReadyReturn program; requires Taxation to prepare initial tax filing for certain taxpayers; requires several State agencies to use tax data to facilitate identification and enrollment for certain social services programs; makes an appropriation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



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2

1 AN ACT requiring certain State agencies to use available data to
2 streamline processes for individuals filing income tax returns and
3 making public assistance applications, amending and
4 supplementing various parts of the statutory law, and making an
5 appropriation.

6

7 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
8 of New Jersey:

9

10 1. (New Section) The Legislature finds and declares that:

11 a. Each year, many low-income New Jersey residents do not
12 file State or federal income tax returns because their annual income
13 falls below the minimum threshold established for filing State and
14 federal tax returns, and the residents do not realize that they may
15 qualify for the federal and State Earned Income Tax Credit. Other
16 State residents may not file tax returns because: 1) the individuals
17 have difficulty accessing requisite tax forms, 2) the taxpayers did
18 not receive their tax documents in the mail, or 3) the individuals
19 may find the task of completing and mailing State and federal tax
20 returns to be overly time consuming or burdensome. These
21 taxpayers may be more likely to file a tax return if they had access
22 to free assistance in preparing and filing State and federal tax
23 returns.

24 b. While New Jersey offers a broad range of social services
25 programs to serve low-income residents, many individuals do not
26 apply for all of the programs for which they qualify, for a variety of
27 reasons, including, but not limited to:

28 (1) individuals may be unaware of the range of programs for
29 which they may qualify;

30 (2) some individuals seeking social services may be discouraged
31 by the need to complete separate and complex applications for each
32 assistance program; and

33 (3) many State residents find the task of locating and gathering
34 the various income and financial information required to apply for
35 each safety net program overly burdensome.

36 c. The Division of Taxation within the Department of the
37 Treasury has ready access to a taxpayer's wage information, as
38 reported to the division by the taxpayer's employer.

39 d. Residents of New Jersey would greatly benefit from a
40 program that harnesses the State's existing tax filing process to
41 facilitate low income residents in accessing essential safety net
42 benefits.

43 e. Such a program would ultimately increase State revenues,
44 since it would increase the number of residents filing taxes, and

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

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1 would result in a savings to the State by creating efficiencies in
2 enrolling residents in social services programs.

3

4 2. R.S.54:50-9 is amended to read as follows:

5 54:50-9. Nothing herein contained shall be construed to prevent:

6 a. The delivery to a taxpayer or the taxpayer's duly authorized
7 representative of a copy of any report or any other paper filed by
8 the taxpayer pursuant to the provisions of this subtitle or of any
9 such State tax law;

10 b. The publication of statistics so classified as to prevent the
11 identification of a particular report and the items thereof;

12 c. The director, in the director's discretion and subject to
13 reasonable conditions imposed by the director, from disclosing the
14 name and address of any licensee under any State tax law, unless
15 expressly prohibited by such State tax law;

16 d. The inspection by the Attorney General or other legal
17 representative of this State of the reports or files relating to the
18 claim of any taxpayer who shall bring an action to review or set
19 aside any tax imposed under any State tax law or against whom an
20 action or proceeding has been instituted in accordance with the
21 provisions thereof;

22 e. The examination of said records and files by the
23 Comptroller, State Auditor or State Commissioner of Finance, or by
24 their respective duly authorized agents;

25 f. The furnishing, at the discretion of the director, of any
26 information contained in tax reports or returns or any audit thereof
27 or the report of any investigation made with respect thereto, filed
28 pursuant to the tax laws, to the taxing officials of any other state,
29 the District of Columbia, the United States and the territories
30 thereof, providing said jurisdictions grant like privileges to this
31 State and providing such information is to be used for tax purposes
32 only;

33 g. The furnishing, at the discretion of the director, of any
34 material information disclosed by the records or files to any law
35 enforcing authority of this State who shall be charged with the
36 investigation or prosecution of any violation of the criminal
37 provisions of this subtitle or of any State tax law;

38 h. The furnishing by the director to the State agency
39 responsible for administering the Child Support Enforcement
40 program pursuant to Title IV-D of the federal Social Security Act,
41 Pub.L.93-647 (42 U.S.C. s.651 et seq.), with the names, home
42 addresses, social security numbers and sources of income and assets
43 of all absent parents who are certified by that agency as being
44 required to pay child support, upon request by the State agency and
45 pursuant to procedures and in a form prescribed by the director;

46 i. The furnishing by the director to the Board of Public
47 Utilities any information contained in tax information statements,
48 reports or returns or any audit thereof or a report of any

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- 1 investigation made with respect thereto, as may be necessary for the
2 administration of P.L.1991, c.184 (C.54:30A-18.6 et al.) and
3 P.L.1997, c.162 (C.54:10A-5.25 et al.);
- 4 j. The furnishing by the director to the Director of the Division
5 of Alcoholic Beverage Control in the Department of Law and
6 Public Safety any information contained in tax information
7 statements, reports or returns or any audit thereof or a report of any
8 investigation made with respect thereto, as may be relevant, in the
9 discretion of the director, in any proceeding conducted for the
10 issuance, suspension or revocation of any license authorized
11 pursuant to Title 33 of the Revised Statutes;
- 12 k. The inspection by the Attorney General or other legal
13 representative of this State of the reports or files of any tobacco
14 product manufacturer, as defined in section 2 of P.L.1999, c.148
15 (C.52:4D-2), for any period in which that tobacco product
16 manufacturer was not or is not in compliance with subsection a. of
17 section 3 of P.L.1999, c.148 (C.52:4D-3), or of any licensed
18 distributor as defined in section 102 of P.L.1948, c.65 (C.54:40A-
19 2), for the purpose of facilitating the administration of the
20 provisions of P.L.1999, c.148 (C.52:4D-1 et seq.);
- 21 l. The furnishing, at the discretion of the director, of
22 information as to whether a contractor or subcontractor holds a
23 valid business registration as defined in section 1 of P.L.2001, c.134
24 (C.52:32-44);
- 25 m. The furnishing by the director to a State agency as defined in
26 section 1 of P.L.1995, c.158 (C.54:50-24) the names of licensees
27 subject to suspension for non-payment of State tax indebtedness
28 pursuant to P.L.2004, c.58 (C.54:50-26.1 et al.);
- 29 n. The release to the United States Department of the Treasury,
30 Bureau of Financial Management Service, or its successor of
31 relevant taxpayer information for purposes of implementing a
32 reciprocal collection and offset of indebtedness agreement entered
33 into between the State of New Jersey and the federal government
34 pursuant to section 1 of P.L.2006, c.32 (C.54:49-12.7);
- 35 o. The examination of said records and files by the
36 Commissioner of Health **【and Senior Services】**, the Commissioner
37 of Human Services, the Medicaid Inspector General, or their
38 respective duly authorized agents, pursuant to section 5 of
39 P.L.2007, c.217 (C.26:2H-18.60e), section 3 of P.L.1968, c.413
40 (C.30:4D-3), or section 5 of P.L.2005, c.156 (C.30:4J-12);
- 41 p. The furnishing at the discretion of the director of employer
42 provided wage and tax withholding information contained in tax
43 reports or returns filed pursuant to N.J.S.54A:7-2, 54A:7-4 and
44 54A:7-7, to the designated municipal officer of a municipality
45 authorized to impose an employer payroll tax pursuant to the
46 provisions of Article 5 (Employer Payroll Tax) of the "Local Tax
47 Authorization Act," P.L.1970, c.326 (C.40:48C-14 et seq.), for the

1 limited purpose of verifying the payroll information reported by
2 employers subject to the employer payroll tax;

3 q. The furnishing by the director to the Commissioner of Labor
4 and Workforce Development of any information, including, but not
5 limited to, tax information statements, reports, audit files, returns,
6 or reports of any investigation for the purpose of labor market
7 research or assisting in investigations pursuant to any State wage,
8 benefit or tax law as enumerated in section 1 of P.L.2009, c.194
9 (C.34:1A-1.11); or pursuant to P.L.1940, c.153 (C.34:2-21.1 et seq.)
10 **【.】**;

11 r. The furnishing by the director to the New Jersey Economic
12 Development Authority any information contained in tax
13 information statements, reports or returns, or any audit thereof or a
14 report of any investigation made with respect thereto, as may be
15 relevant to assist the authority in the implementation of programs
16 through which grants, loans, tax credits, or other forms of financial
17 assistance are provided. The director shall provide to the New
18 Jersey Economic Development Authority, upon request, such
19 information **【.】**;

20 s. The furnishing by the director to the Commissioner of
21 Banking and Insurance of any information, including, but not
22 limited to, tax information statements, reports, audit files, returns,
23 or reports of any investigation for the purpose of assisting in
24 investigations pursuant to any insurance fraud investigation as
25 enumerated in P.L.1983, c.320 (C.17:33A-1 et seq.)**【.】**;

26 t. The furnishing of records and data by the director to the
27 Commissioner of Human Services, the Commissioner of Health, the
28 Commissioner of Community Affairs or the Secretary of
29 Agriculture for the purpose of developing and implementing a
30 process to identify and enroll individuals and households who may
31 be eligible for public assistance benefits, as required by sections 6,
32 7, 8, and 9 of P.L. , c. (C. , C. , and C.) (pending
33 before the Legislature as this bill).

34 (cf: P.L.2021, c.167, s.6)

35

36 3. (New section) There is established the ReadyReturn
37 Program in the Division of Taxation in the Department of the
38 Treasury, in partnership with the Department of Human Services,
39 the Department of Health, the Department of Community Affairs,
40 and the Department of Agriculture. The program is an optional
41 filing method that provides eligible taxpayers tax returns using data
42 already collected by the division from reports from employers and
43 other sources. The division will then share income and other data,
44 derived from W-2 and income tax forms, with the Department of
45 Human Services, the Department of Health, the Department of
46 Community Affairs, and the Department of Agriculture in order to
47 identify and enroll individuals, including dependent minors, who

1 may be eligible for certain social services programs offered by the
2 State.

3
4 4. (New section) a. For taxable years beginning on or after
5 January 1, 2023, the division shall prepare, as part of the
6 ReadyReturn Program, an electronic tax return for any taxpayer
7 whose wages were reported by the taxpayer's employer to the
8 division, using the data from that report to calculate the return. An
9 eligible taxpayer may participate in the program by filing the tax
10 return prepared for the taxpayer pursuant to this section. A tax
11 return prepared pursuant to this section shall include:

12 (1) a record of the taxpayer's wages for the taxable year; and
13 (2) the tax liability of the taxpayer based on the income of the
14 taxpayer for the taxable year.

15 b. The division shall develop an alternative method for an
16 eligible taxpayer to request the taxpayer's completed tax return in
17 paper form.

18 c. The division shall notify each taxpayer that is eligible for a
19 tax return prepared pursuant to this section that the ReadyReturn
20 Program is a filing option available to eligible taxpayers. The
21 notification shall include the following information:

22 (1) a description of the program;
23 (2) the taxpayer's eligibility for participation in the program and
24 the taxpayer's ability to view or file a tax return prepared for the
25 taxpayer pursuant to the program; and
26 (3) that the taxpayer's participation in the program is optional.

27 d. As used in sections 3 through 4 of this act:

28 "Division" means the Division of Taxation in the Department of
29 the Treasury.

30 "Eligible taxpayer" or "taxpayer" means any individual whose
31 income in whole or in part is subject to the tax imposed by the
32 "New Jersey Gross Income Tax Act," P.L.1976, c.47 (C.54A:1-1 et
33 seq.) and whose wages were reported by the taxpayer's employer to
34 the division.

35 "ReadyReturn Program" or "program" means the ReadyReturn
36 Program established pursuant to section 3 of this act.

37
38 5. (New section) The Director of the Division of Taxation
39 shall promulgate regulations pursuant to the "Administrative
40 Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) necessary to
41 effectuate the provisions of sections 3 through 4 of this act.

42
43 6. (New section) a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any
44 other law to the contrary, no later than January 1, 2023, the
45 Commissioner of Human Services, in coordination with the
46 Division of Taxation within the Department of the Treasury, and as
47 part of the ReadyReturn program established pursuant to section 3
48 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this

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1 bill), shall utilize income and other data derived from W-2 and
2 income tax forms, which shall be provided electronically by the
3 division, to develop and implement an automated process to identify
4 and enroll individuals, including dependent minors, who may be
5 eligible for benefits under the following programs:

6 (1) the Work First New Jersey/Temporary Assistance for Needy
7 Families (WFNJ/TANF) and WFNJ/General Assistance
8 (WFNJ/GA) programs;

9 (2) subsidized child care services for qualified low-income
10 households;

11 (3) the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
12 and

13 (4) any other social services programs administered by the
14 department which the commissioner deems appropriate to include
15 under this initiative.

16 b. Whenever feasible, and to the extent allowed under State and
17 federal statute and regulation, the department shall confer
18 presumptive eligibility for the programs enumerated in subsection a.
19 of this section for those individuals, including dependent minors,
20 identified through this automated process. Following a
21 determination of presumptive eligibility, the department shall notify
22 the individual, in writing, of the individual's status, and shall secure
23 written authorization from the individual for enrollment in the
24 applicable social services program.

25 c. If the department is unable to confer presumptive eligibility
26 or determine with certainty that an individual, including a
27 dependent minor, is eligible for enrollment in one or more of the
28 programs enumerated in subsection a. of this section, the
29 department shall utilize the information provided by the division to
30 contact and further screen the individual to determine eligibility for
31 benefits under these programs. If the individual's eligibility for
32 benefits under any program specified in subsection a. of this section
33 is subsequently confirmed, the department shall secure
34 authorization from the individual before expeditiously enrolling the
35 individual in the program.

36 d. The department shall utilize income and other data provided
37 electronically by the division to notify beneficiaries of an eligibility
38 redetermination, as required under State or federal statute, for any
39 program specified in subsection a. of this section.

40 e. The commissioner shall apply for such State plan
41 amendments or waivers as may be necessary to implement the
42 provisions of this section and to continue to secure federal financial
43 participation for the WFNJ/TANF program, subsidized child care
44 programs for qualified low-income households, and SNAP.

45 f. As used in this section,

46 "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)" means the
47 New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,

1 established pursuant to the federal "Food and Nutrition Act of
2 2008," Pub.L.110-246 (7 U.S.C. s.2011 et seq.).

3 "Work First New Jersey" means the program established
4 pursuant to P.L.1997, c. 38 (C.44:10-55 et seq.) in accordance with
5 authorization received under Title IV of the federal "Personal
6 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996,"
7 Pub.L.104-193 (8 U.S.C. s.1601 et seq.). Work First New Jersey
8 includes the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
9 program and the State General Assistance program.

10

11 7. (New section) a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any
12 other law to the contrary, no later than January 1, 2023, the
13 Commissioner of Health, in coordination with the Division of
14 Taxation within the Department of the Treasury, and as part of the
15 ReadyReturn program established pursuant to section 3 of
16 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill),
17 shall utilize income and other data derived from W-2 and income
18 tax forms, which shall be provided electronically by the division, to
19 develop and implement an automated process to identify women,
20 and their children under the age of five, who may be eligible for
21 benefits under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for
22 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), established pursuant to the
23 federal "Child Nutrition Act of 1966," Pub.L. 95-267 (42 U.S.C. s.
24 1786).

25 b. Whenever feasible, and to the extent allowed under State and
26 federal statute and regulation, the department shall confer
27 presumptive eligibility for WIC benefits for those women, and their
28 eligible children, identified through this automated process.
29 Following a determination of presumptive eligibility, the
30 department shall notify the woman, in writing, of the status of the
31 woman and her eligible children, and shall secure written
32 authorization from the woman for enrollment in the WIC program.

33 c. If the department is unable to confer presumptive eligibility
34 or determine with certainty that a woman, and her children under
35 the age of five, is eligible for enrollment in the WIC program, the
36 department shall utilize the information provided by the division to
37 contact a potentially-eligible woman for further screening to
38 determine eligibility for benefits under the WIC program. If the
39 department subsequently confirms eligibility for WIC benefits, the
40 department shall secure authorization from the woman before
41 expeditiously enrolling the woman and her eligible children in the
42 program.

43 d. The department shall utilize income and other data provided
44 electronically by the division to process and notify WIC
45 beneficiaries of an eligibility redetermination, as required under
46 State or federal statute.

47 e. The commissioner shall apply for such State plan
48 amendments or waivers as may be necessary to implement the

1 provisions of this act and to continue to secure federal financial
2 participation for the WIC program.

3
4 8. (New section) a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any
5 other law to the contrary, no later than January 1, 2023, the
6 Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), in
7 coordination with the Division of Taxation within the Department
8 of the Treasury, and as part of the ReadyReturn program established
9 pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
10 Legislature as this bill), shall utilize income and other data derived
11 from W-2 and income tax forms, which shall be provided
12 electronically by the division, to develop and implement an
13 automated process to identify and enroll individuals, who are over
14 age 18, whose households may be eligible for benefits under the
15 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP),
16 established pursuant to Pub.L. 97-35 (42 U.S.C. s.8621 et seq.).

17 b. Whenever feasible, and to the extent allowed under State and
18 federal statute and regulation, the department shall confer
19 presumptive eligibility for LIHEAP assistance for any eligible
20 individual in a household who has been identified through this
21 automated process. Following a determination of presumptive
22 eligibility, the department shall notify the individual, in writing, of
23 the individual's status, and shall secure written authorization from
24 the individual for enrollment of the household in LIHEAP.

25 c. If the department is unable to confer presumptive eligibility
26 or determine with certainty that an individual's household is
27 eligible for enrollment in LIHEAP, the department shall utilize the
28 information provided by the division to contact and further screen
29 individuals in the household to determine eligibility for benefits
30 under this program. If the eligibility for assistance under LIHEAP
31 is subsequently confirmed, the department shall secure
32 authorization from one eligible adult, who is over the age of 18, in
33 the household, before expeditiously enrolling the household in
34 LIHEAP.

35 d. The department shall utilize income and other data provided
36 electronically by the division to process and notify beneficiaries of
37 an eligibility redetermination, as required under State or federal
38 stature, for LIHEAP.

39 e. The commissioner shall apply for such State plan
40 amendments or waivers as may be necessary to implement the
41 provisions of this act and to continue to secure federal financial
42 participation for any State energy assistance expenditures under
43 LIHEAP.

44
45 9. (New section) a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any
46 other law to the contrary, no later than January 1, 2023, the
47 Secretary of Agriculture, in coordination with the Division of
48 Taxation within the Department of the Treasury and the

1 Commissioner of Education, and as part of the ReadyReturn
2 program established pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.)
3 (pending before the Legislature as this bill), shall utilize income and
4 other data derived from W-2 and income tax forms, which shall be
5 provided electronically by the division, to develop and implement
6 an automated process to identify and enroll individuals, including
7 dependent minors, who may be eligible for nutrition assistance
8 benefits, authorized pursuant to the federal “Healthy, Hunger-Free
9 Kids Act of 2010,” Pub.L.111-296 (42 U.S.C., s.1751 et seq.), and
10 food distribution programs authorized under the federal
11 “Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018,” Pub.L.115-334. These
12 programs include, but are not limited to:

- 13 (1) the National School Lunch Program;
- 14 (2) the School Breakfast Program;
- 15 (3) the Child and Adult Care Food Program;
- 16 (4) the Summer Food Service Program;
- 17 (5) the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); and,
- 18 (6) any other nutrition assistance and food distribution programs
19 administered by the department which the commissioner deems
20 appropriate to include under this initiative.

21 b. Whenever feasible, and to the extent allowed under State and
22 federal statute and regulation, the department shall confer
23 presumptive eligibility for the programs enumerated in subsection a.
24 of this section for those individuals, including dependent minors,
25 identified through this automated process. Following a
26 determination of presumptive eligibility, the department shall notify
27 the individual, in writing, of the individual’s status, and shall secure
28 written authorization from the individual for enrollment in the
29 applicable nutrition assistance programs.

30 c. If the department is unable to confer presumptive eligibility
31 or determine with certainty that an individual, including a
32 dependent minor, is eligible for enrollment in one or more of the
33 programs enumerated in subsection a. of this section, the
34 department shall utilize the information provided by the division to
35 contact and further screen the individual to determine eligibility for
36 benefits under these programs. If the individual’s eligibility for
37 benefits under any program specified in subsection a. of this section
38 is subsequently confirmed, the department shall secure
39 authorization from the individual before expeditiously enrolling the
40 individual in the program.

41 d. The department shall utilize income and other data provided
42 electronically by the division to notify beneficiaries of an eligibility
43 redetermination, as required under State or federal stature, for any
44 program specified in subsection a. of this section.

45 e. The commissioner shall apply for such State plan
46 amendments or waivers as may be necessary to implement the
47 provisions of this section and to continue to secure any available

1 federal financial participation for the applicable nutrition assistance
2 programs.

3 f. As used in this section,

4 “Child and Adult Care Food Program” means the federal
5 program administered by the Food and Nutrition Service within the
6 United States Department of Agriculture and authorized pursuant to
7 the “Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010,” Pub.L.111-296 (42
8 U.S.C., s.1751 et seq.).

9 “Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)” means the
10 federal food distribution program, established pursuant to the
11 “Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983,” Pub.L.98-8 (7 U.S.C.
12 s.7501 et seq.), which supports food banks, soup kitchens and other
13 emergency feeding organizations that serve low-income Americans.
14 TEFAP is administered at the federal level by the Food and
15 Nutrition Service within the United States Department of
16 Agriculture, and at the State level by the Department of Agriculture.

17 “National School Lunch Program” means the federal program
18 authorized under the “Richard B. Russell National School Lunch
19 Act,” Pub.L.79-396 (42 U.S.C. s.1751 et seq.).

20 “School Breakfast Program” means the program established
21 pursuant to P.L.2003, c.4 (C.18A:33-10) in accordance with
22 authorization received under Section 4 of the “Child Nutrition Act
23 of 1966,” Pub.L. 95-267 (42 U.S.C. s. 1786).

24 “Summer Food Service Program” means the program established
25 under P.L.2017, c.387 (C.18A:33-23) in accordance with
26 authorization received pursuant to the “Richard B. Russell National
27 School Lunch Act,” Pub.L.79-396 (42 U.S.C. s.1751 et seq.).

28

29 10. (New section) The Commissioner of Human Services,
30 pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410
31 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), and in consultation with the State Treasurer,
32 the Commissioner of Health, the Commissioner of Community
33 Affairs, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Commissioner of
34 Education, shall adopt such rules and regulations necessary to
35 implement the provisions of sections 6 through 9 of this act.

36

37 11. (New section) There are appropriated, from the General
38 Fund to the Department of the Treasury, such sums as are necessary
39 to effectuate the purposes of this act. The State Treasurer is hereby
40 authorized to allocate funds, from the total amount appropriated
41 under this section, to the Department of Human Services, the
42 Department of Health, the Department of Community Affairs and
43 the Department of Agriculture to carry out each department’s
44 responsibilities under the ReadyReturn program established
45 pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
46 Legislature as this bill).

1 12. (New section) Sections 3 through 5 of this act will take
2 effect immediately. Sections 6 through 10 of this act shall take
3 effect on January 1, 2023, but the State Treasurer, the
4 Commissioner of Human Services, the Commissioner of Health, the
5 Commissioner of Community Affairs, the Secretary of Agriculture,
6 and the Commissioner of Education may take such anticipatory
7 administrative action in advance thereof as shall be necessary for
8 the implementation of this act.

9
10
11 STATEMENT
12

13 This bill establishes the ReadyReturn Program in the Division of
14 Taxation in the Department of the Treasury, which will manage the
15 program in partnership with the Department of Human Services, the
16 Department of Health, the Department of Community Affairs, and
17 the Department of Agriculture. The ReadyReturn Program, which
18 is modeled after a pilot program that the State of California initiated
19 in 2005, is an optional tax return filing method that provides
20 eligible taxpayers tax returns using data already collected by the
21 division from reports from employers and other sources. The
22 division will then share income and other data, derived from W-2
23 and income tax forms, with the Department of Human Services
24 (DHS), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of
25 Community Affairs (DCA), and the Department of Agriculture
26 (DOA) in order to routinely identify and enroll individuals,
27 including dependent minors, who may be eligible for certain social
28 services programs administered by the State.

29 It is the intent of the bill's sponsor to harness the State's existing
30 tax filing process to facilitate low income residents in accessing
31 essential safety net benefits, such as cash, nutrition, subsidized
32 child care, and heating assistance. The ReadyReturn Program is
33 designed to increase the income tax data gathered by the State
34 through the removal of any obstacles in the preparation of a tax
35 return. Subsequently, various State departments can use the data
36 collected to streamline and expedite the application process for
37 social services programs. As a result, the State should realize
38 increased revenues from the higher number of residents filing tax
39 returns, and should realize General Fund savings from increased
40 efficiencies in enrolling individuals in social services programs

41 Under the bill, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1,
42 2023, the Division of Taxation in the Department of the Treasury is
43 to prepare, as part of the ReadyReturn Program, an electronic tax
44 return for any taxpayer whose wages were reported by the
45 taxpayer's employer to the division, using the data from that report
46 to calculate the return. An eligible taxpayer may participate in the
47 program by filing the tax return prepared for the taxpayer pursuant
48 to the bill. A tax return prepared pursuant to the bill is to include: a

1 record of the taxpayer's wages for the taxable year; and the tax
2 liability of the taxpayer based on the income of the taxpayer for the
3 taxable year.

4 The division is to develop an alternative method for an eligible
5 taxpayer to request the taxpayer's completed tax return in paper
6 form.

7 The division is to notify each taxpayer that is eligible for a tax
8 return prepared pursuant to the bill that the ReadyReturn Program is
9 a filing option available to eligible taxpayers. The notification is to
10 include the following information: a description of the program; the
11 taxpayer's eligibility for participation in the program and the
12 taxpayer's ability to view or file a tax return prepared for the
13 taxpayer pursuant to the program; and that the taxpayer's
14 participation in the program is optional.

15 In addition, the bill requires the division to electronically provide
16 data from W-2 forms and income tax returns to the DHS, DOH,
17 DCA and DOA, and amends current statute to newly authorize the
18 division to share earnings and tax data with these departments.

19 The departments will utilize the income and other data from the
20 division to identify and screen New Jersey residents for eligibility
21 for the social services programs under their purview, such as: the
22 Work First New Jersey Program; subsidized child care programs;
23 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; the Special
24 Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants, and Children program;
25 the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and free and
26 reduced-price school meals during the school year and in the
27 summer. Where feasible, and permitted under State and federal
28 statute and regulation, the DHS, DOH, DCA and DOA will confer
29 presumptive eligibility for all social services programs for which an
30 individual is eligible. Subsequent to a presumptive eligibility
31 determination, the departments will notify the individual in question
32 of the individual's enrollment in a social services program, and
33 secure authorization for services and benefits.

34 In the case of an individual for whom an eligibility determination
35 cannot be made based on the available information, the departments
36 will initiate contact to: 1) notify the individual of their potential
37 eligibility for assistance or services under one or more programs, 2)
38 obtain any information needed to determine the individual's
39 eligibility for these programs, 3) secure the individual's
40 authorization to be provided social services through one or more
41 programs; and, 4) expeditiously enroll the individual in any social
42 services programs for which the individual is eligible.

43 Under this bill, the DHS, DOH, DCA and DOA are also
44 authorized to automatically issue a redetermination of benefits,
45 using the same income and tax data provided by the division.
46 Beneficiaries of social services programs will be notified of the
47 outcome of any redetermination of benefits. For any beneficiary for
48 whom continued eligibility for a social services program cannot be

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1 determined from the available income and tax data, the department
2 overseeing the program shall contact the beneficiary to secure the
3 requisite information.

4 In addition, the bill authorizes the commissioners of the DHS,
5 DOH, DCA and DOA to submit any state plan amendments or
6 federal waivers needed to implement the requirements of the bill,
7 and to ensure continued federal financial participation for the
8 relevant social services programs.

9 Finally, the bill appropriates from the General Fund such sums as
10 are necessary to effectuate the purposes of the ReadyReturn
11 Program. The State Treasurer is authorized to determine the
12 amount of funding, from the total amount appropriated, to be
13 allocated to the DHS, DOH, DCA and DOA to fulfill each
14 department's responsibilities under the ReadyReturn Program.