

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL NOTE

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5040

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

DATED: OCTOBER 29, 2026

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:

Establishes Hope Card Program to provide victims of domestic violence with restraining order quick reference wallet card; makes appropriation.
- Type of Impact:

Annual State and local cost increases; potential annual State revenue increase.
- Agencies Affected:

Department of Law and Public Safety; the Judiciary; Department of Corrections; State Parole Board; local governments.

Judiciary Estimate

Fiscal Impact	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
State Expenditure Increase	\$4.5 million	\$3.4 million	\$3.1million

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	Annual
State Cost Increase	Indeterminate
Potential State Revenue Increase	Indeterminate
Local Cost Increase	Indeterminate

- According to an estimate provided by the Judiciary, the bill would require State expenditures in the amount of \$4.5 million in the first full year of implementation, \$3.4 million in the second year, and \$3.1 million in the third year. The Judiciary’s estimate breaks down the costs in three general categories: development and maintenance of the Hope Card program; new staff salaries for 21 positions; and the development and maintenance of a secure electronic alternative. The Judiciary estimates that it may receive more than 13,000 Hope Card requests each year.
- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) cannot confirm or refute the Judiciary’s expenditure estimate, specifically the magnitude of the overall State spending increase and the need to create 21 new positions.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill establishes the Hope Card Program in New Jersey. Under the bill, a victim of domestic violence who obtains a final restraining order may request a Hope Card from the court at no cost. The Administrative Office of the Courts is authorized to develop the Hope Card as either a laminated, durable, plastic, wallet-sized card or a secure electronic record accessible through a mobile device, website, application, or other technology. A Hope Card must contain essential information about the restraining order as enumerated in the bill.

Under the bill, a law enforcement officer presented with a Hope Card must verify the information with the State’s domestic violence central registry as part of any domestic violence investigation. The bill also provides that the Administrative Office of the Courts must consult with the State Domestic Violence Working Group and other knowledgeable persons or organizations concerning the design of the card. The bill further requires the Office of the Attorney General and the Administrative Office of the Courts to incorporate information on the Hope Card Program into their respective existing domestic violence training programs.

The bill additionally provides that theft, defacement, or alteration of a Hope Card by the defendant subject to the restraining order is deemed contempt of court in the fourth degree. A crime of the fourth degree is punishable by a term of imprisonment of up to 18 months, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

Finally, the bill provides for an open-ended appropriation to the Judiciary for the implementation of the program and requires the State to appropriate monies to support the implementation of the bill in future years.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

THE JUDICIARY

According to an estimate provided by the Judiciary, the bill would require State expenditures in the amount of \$4.5 million in the first full year of implementation, \$3.4 million in the second year, and \$3.1 million in the third year. The Judiciary’s estimate breaks down the costs in three general categories: development and maintenance of the Hope Card program; new staff salaries; and the development and maintenance of a secure electronic alternative.

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Develop & Maintain Request Methods (On-Line & Printed)	\$600,000	\$200,000	\$0
New Staff (21 - AS3 positions)	\$3,175,830	\$3,026,814	\$3,117,618
Develop/Maintain Secure Electronic Alternative	\$680,000	\$170,000	\$0
TOTAL	\$4,455,830	\$3,396,814	\$3,117,618

The Judiciary estimates that it may receive more than 13,000 Hope Card requests each year. No significant revenue increases are anticipated.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS cannot confirm or refute the Judiciary's expenditure estimate, specifically the magnitude of the overall State spending increase and the need to create 21 new positions.

In general, the OLS concludes that the provision of an optional domestic violence restraining order quick reference wallet card to victims of domestic violence who receive a final restraining order will increase annual State and local expenditures. The OLS lacks sufficient information to quantify the size of the expenditure increase, as it is not possible to know how many domestic violence victims will request a restraining order quick reference wallet card, also known as a Hope Card, nor how much State and local training costs for law enforcement officers will be.

The following State and local agencies would likely incur expenditure increases: a) Department of Law and Public Safety would incur additional costs associated with implementation, guidance, and training activities; b) municipal police and courts would incur additional costs to train law enforcement personnel and integrate Hope Card verification procedures into existing domestic violence enforcement operations; and c) the Judiciary would incur costs to establish and administer the Hope Card Program, including information technology modifications, card production, personnel, and training expenses.

The bill establishes a crime of the fourth degree for a defendant subject to a restraining order for the theft, defacement, alteration, or falsification of a Hope Card. The OLS does not have sufficient information on the potential increase in the number of arrests, convictions, terms of imprisonment, if any, and parolees to be supervised upon release, resulting from the bill's provisions and, therefore, is unable to estimate the annual costs to the State.

Generally, crimes of the fourth degree carry a presumption of non-incarceration for first time offenders. However, the OLS finds that to the extent that the bill will result in additional incarcerations, based on information provided by the Department of Corrections, the FY 2026 average annual cost for housing, ensuring security, and providing services to an incarcerated individual was \$78,848, whereas the average daily cost was \$216. According to the State Parole Board, the annual average marginal cost to supervise one additional parolee is estimated at \$4,002 for FY2026. The average cost per parolee, with all overhead costs included, is estimated at \$6,884 for FY2026.

Lastly, the OLS notes the State may receive indeterminate revenue from fines imposed on individuals convicted of theft, defacement, alteration, or falsification of a Hope Card by a defendant who is the subject of a restraining order. However, the State's ability to collect criminal fines and penalties has historically been limited.

Section: *Judiciary*
Analyst: *Anuja Pande Joshi*
 Senior Research Analyst
Approved: *Thomas Koenig*
 Legislative Budget and Finance Officer

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).