

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 597

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 15, 2026

The Senate Judiciary Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 597.

Under current law, anyone who gambles at a casino or simulcasting facility while under the age of 21 years, the current age at which a person is authorized to purchase and consume alcohol, is guilty of a disorderly persons offense. A person who allows someone under that age to gamble, while they are in that person's legal care or custody, is also guilty of a disorderly persons offense. A licensee or employee of a casino who allows someone under that age to gamble is guilty of a disorderly persons offense as well.

This bill changes the penalties for each of these actions from that of a disorderly persons offense to instead a civil fine of up to \$500 for the first offense, up to \$1,000 for the second offense, and up to \$2,000 for any offense thereafter. The fines collected would be dedicated by appropriation of the Legislature to the Department of Human Services for prevention, education, and treatment programs for compulsive gambling, such as those provided by the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2026-2027 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.