SENATE COMMUNITY AND URBAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1566

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 1, 2026

The Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1566.

As reported, this bill establishes the "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program" in the Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Community Affairs to support the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire companies. The bill establishes a special, non-lapsing fund to be known as the "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program Fund" (fund), which is required to be annually credited with money appropriated by the Legislature. Under the bill, the Director of the Division of Fire Safety (division) is required to develop and administer a grant program to annually distribute monies in the fund to volunteer fire companies in the form of grants to support the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire companies, including the purchasing of emergency equipment.

Under the bill, to participate in the grant program, a volunteer fire company is to be required to submit an application to the division. An application is required to include certain information detailing the volunteer fire company's proposed plans for the grant funding.

The Director of the division (director) is required to establish an annual maximum grant award amount to ensure that the maximum number of program applicants receive a grant award, given available funding.

Under the bill, within one year of receiving a grant, each participating volunteer fire company is required to submit a report to the division detailing the use and impact of the funds.

The bill requires the director to compile the reports for inclusion in a comparative profile of the participating volunteer fire companies and post the profile for public inspection on the division's Internet website. The bill also provides that, within one year of posting the comparative profile, the director is to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature that contains information on the implementation of the grant program.

The bill appropriates $10 million, as specified in the bill, from the General Fund for the purpose of supporting the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire departments.

This bill was prefiled 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.