

[Second Reprint]
SENATE, No. 1788

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
222nd LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2026 SESSION

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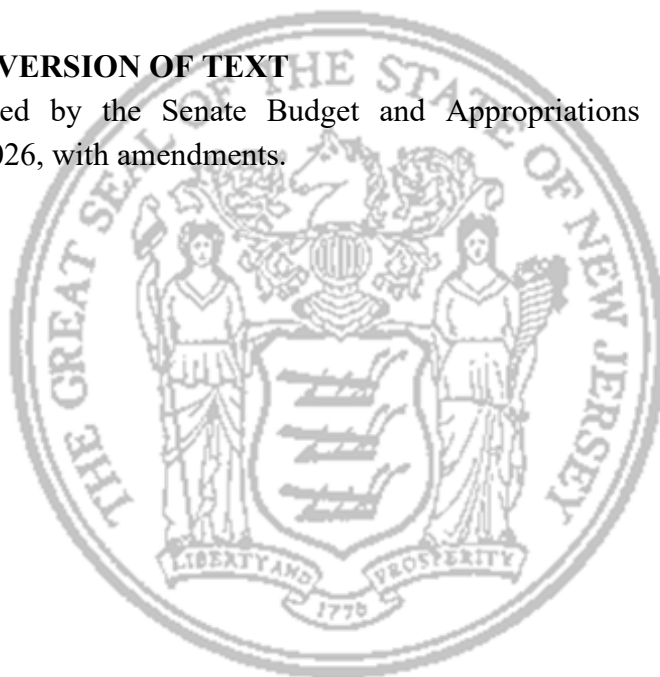
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SYNOPSIS

Concerns processing of applications for permits, licenses, or certifications in NJ; requires State entities refund application fee in certain circumstances; requires Governor establish target application processing times and permitting and licensing performance dashboard.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on October 5, 2026, with amendments.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/05/2026)

1 AN ACT ²~~establishing a fee refund program for ¹individuals and¹~~
 2 ~~businesses applying~~ concerning the processing of applications²
 3 for permits, licenses, or certifications in this State and
 4 supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes^{2, 2}

5
 6 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
 7 *of New Jersey:*

8
 9 ²~~1.a.~~ Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the
 10 contrary, upon and after the effective date of this act¹~~], P.L. , c.~~
 11 ~~(pending before the Legislature as this bill)]~~¹, any State entity that
 12 issues permits, licenses, or certifications to ¹~~individuals or~~
 13 ~~businesses~~¹ shall compile a catalog of the types of permits, licenses,
 14 or certifications it issues and submit that catalog to the Governor.
 15 The catalog shall include:

16 (1) a description of each type of permit, license, or certification
 17 issued by the State entity, the term thereof, and the statutory,
 18 regulatory, or other legal authority therefor;

19 (2) the method by which the State entity receives applications
 20 for each type of permit, license, or certification and when that
 21 method was last updated;

22 (3) the statutory, regulatory, or other legal authority governing
 23 the length of time within which the State entity ¹~~must~~ shall¹
 24 process applications for each type of permit, license, or
 25 certification;

26 (4) the application fee charged by the State entity for each type
 27 of permit, license, or certification, and the statutory, regulatory, or
 28 other legal authority therefor;

29 (5) the State entity's analysis and recommendation of the
 30 appropriate length of time to promptly process applications for each
 31 type of permit, license, or certification, after the applicant has
 32 properly and timely submitted all information required by the State
 33 entity to act upon the application; and

34 (6) other relevant information as requested.

35 b. Following receipt and review of the State entity catalogs,
 36 information, recommendations, and analyses, the Governor's office
 37 shall establish recommended application processing times for the
 38 various types of permits, licenses, and certifications, as appropriate
 39 ¹, no later than 180 days after the effective date of this act¹.

40 c. ¹~~(1)~~¹ Any State entity that exceeds ¹15 days past¹ the
 41 recommended application processing time as established after
 42 having received a completed application shall refund the amount of

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.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate SCM committee amendments adopted March 16, 2026.

²Senate SBA committee amendments adopted October 5, 2026.

1 the application fee to the extent permitted by law. The refund shall
2 have no bearing on the disposition of the underlying application.

3 ¹(2) A State entity shall not be required to refund an application
4 fee pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection if a delay in
5 processing an application for a permit, license, or certification is
6 due to the fault of the applicant, including, but not limited to, the
7 submission of an incomplete application.¹

8 d. For the purposes of this section, “State entity” means a State
9 department or agency, board, commission, corporation, or
10 authority.²

11
12 ²[2. This act shall take effect on the 90th day after the date of
13 enactment.]²

14
15 ²1. a. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the
16 contrary, upon and after the effective date of this act, P.L. , c.
17 (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), any State
18 entity that issues permits, licenses, or certifications to individuals or
19 businesses shall compile a catalog of the types of permits, licenses,
20 or certifications it issues and submit that catalog to the Governor.
21 The catalog shall include:

22 (1) a description of each type of permit, license, or certification
23 issued by the State entity, the term thereof, and the statutory,
24 regulatory, or other legal authority therefor;

25 (2) the method by which the State entity receives applications
26 for each type of permit, license, or certification and when that
27 method was last updated;

28 (3) the statutory, regulatory, or other legal authority governing
29 the length of time within which the State entity shall process
30 applications for each type of permit, license, or certification;

31 (4) the application fee charged by the State entity for each type
32 of permit, license, or certification, and the statutory, regulatory, or
33 other legal authority therefor;

34 (5) the State entity’s analysis and recommendation of the
35 appropriate length of time to promptly process applications for each
36 type of permit, license, or certification, after the applicant has
37 properly and timely submitted all information required by the State
38 entity to act upon the application;

39 (6) the number of applications received for each type of permit,
40 license, or certification issued by the State entity during the prior
41 fiscal year;

42 (7) the median and average application processing times, which
43 shall include the median and average application completeness
44 review times and the median and average processing times for
45 providing the appropriate permit, license, or certification after the
46 application is deemed to be complete;

1 (8) the number and percentage of completed applications that
2 receive a final determination within the applicable statutory,
3 regulatory, or recommended processing period;

4 (9) the number of applications for which processing was
5 suspended or extended due to the applicant's action or omission;

6 (10) whether the application for a permit, license, or certification
7 issued by the State entity requires the review or approval of another
8 State entity;

9 (11) the State entity's application completeness checklist required
10 pursuant to subsection d. of this section; and

11 (12) other relevant information as requested by the Governor's
12 Office.

13 The State entity shall review the catalog prepared pursuant to
14 this subsection at least once every four years. Upon completion of
15 the review, the head of the State entity shall submit the review to
16 the Governor. A comprehensive written review prepared in
17 accordance with section 2 of P.L.2011, c.34 (C.52:14B-27) shall
18 satisfy the requirements of this subsection upon submission of the
19 review to the Governor.

20 b. (1) Following receipt and review of the State entity catalogs,
21 information, recommendations, and analyses, the Governor's Office
22 shall, using uniform standards, establish target application
23 processing times for the various types of permits, licenses, and
24 certifications, as appropriate, no later than one year after the
25 effective date of this act, P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
26 Legislature as this bill). The target application processing times
27 shall include, but not be limited to, a time period in which a State
28 entity shall:

29 (a) determine the completeness of an application;

30 (b) electronically notify applicants of the completion status of an
31 application, the notification of which shall provide the
32 determination of completeness or, if the application is determined to
33 be incomplete, shall identify the information and documentation
34 necessary to complete the application; and

35 (c) provide an applicant with a final determination regarding the
36 application for the permit, license, or certification after notifying
37 the applicant of application completeness.

38 (2) The Governor's Office shall also establish uniform
39 procedures for:

40 (a) the suspension or extension of a processing period due to an
41 applicant's action or omission, which shall, at a minimum, require
42 State entities to provide applicants with a written or electronic
43 notice of the suspension or extension, the reason for the suspension
44 or extension, and the information, documentation, or action
45 necessary for the processing of the application to resume;

46 (b) the identification of applications requiring coordinated
47 review by multiple State agencies; and

1 (c) the escalation of applications that materially exceed
2 applicable processing times, which shall include the assigning of an
3 appropriate supervisory employee who was not principally assigned
4 to review the application or, in the case of a multi-entity review,
5 include the referral of the application to the designated lead State
6 entity and shall not require the approval of the application.

7 (3) The Governor's Office shall amend, establish, or reestablish
8 the target application processing times and uniform procedures at
9 least once every four years upon receipt of the review required
10 pursuant to subsection a. of this section.

11 c. (1) Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the
12 contrary, any State entity that exceeds 15 days past the target
13 application processing time as established after having received a
14 completed application shall refund the amount of the application fee
15 unless otherwise prohibited by State or federal law. The refund
16 shall have no bearing on the disposition of the underlying
17 application, shall not constitute approval, and shall not limit the
18 State entity's obligation to process the application.

19 (2) A State entity shall not be required to refund an application
20 fee pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection if a delay in
21 processing an application for a permit, license, or certification is
22 due to:

23 (a) the applicant's failure to timely provide information
24 reasonably necessary for the processing of the application;

25 (b) a material modification requested by the applicant;

26 (c) a delay requested or agreed to in writing by the applicant;

27 (d) a judicial order;

28 (e) a requirement of federal law or action of a federal agency;

29 (f) a declared state of emergency, or a substantially similar
30 circumstance, beyond the reasonable control of the State entity; or

31 (g) another circumstance expressly provided by State or federal
32 law.

33 A State entity shall not be required to refund an application fee
34 if, after an application has been deemed complete, additional
35 investigation, fact-finding, professional or technical review,
36 background investigation, adjudicatory proceeding, or other review
37 is reasonably necessary to determine whether the applicant satisfies
38 applicable statutory, regulatory, and legal standards. The State
39 entity shall provide the applicant with written or electronic notice
40 stating the basis for the additional review and a revised anticipated
41 processing period. An extension pursuant to this paragraph shall
42 not be based solely upon staffing shortages, administrative backlog,
43 or ordinary workload.

44 When an application for a permit, license, or certification, or any
45 combination thereof, requires the review of multiple State entities, a
46 State entity shall be prohibited from withholding a refund pursuant
47 to paragraph (1) of this subsection due to the failure of another

1 State entity to complete its review, unless the State entity is legally
2 unable to make a final determination without the completed review.

3 d. Any State entity that issues permits, licenses, or
4 certifications to individuals or businesses shall establish an
5 application completeness checklist for each type of permit, license,
6 or certification. The checklist shall identify the information and
7 documentation necessary for an application for that permit, license,
8 or certification to be deemed complete and shall be made available
9 on the State entity's Internet website.

10 e. As used in this act:

11 "Certification" means mandatory and nonmandatory
12 government-issued credentials including, but not limited to, those
13 required for contracting as a small business with a State entity,
14 obtaining formal permission to conduct work that requires
15 specialized approval, or meeting State eligibility to become a public
16 educator or any other vocational or technical professional.

17 "Completed application" means an application containing all
18 information and documentation required by applicable law or
19 regulation and the State entity's publicly available application
20 completeness checklist established pursuant to subsection d. of this
21 section, together with additional information reasonably necessary
22 to address circumstances particular to the application.

23 "Final determination" means the approval, conditional approval,
24 denial, issuance, or other final disposition of an application by the
25 responsible State entity.

26 "License" means a legal authorization that grants continuing and
27 formalized permission to an applicant to conduct work including,
28 but not limited to, work that involves utility installation on State
29 property, work that involves the handling of personal identification,
30 or work that requires legal authorization to practice the profession,
31 specialized endorsements, or legal documentation for the purchase
32 and use of goods and services.

33 "Permit" means any formal approval or authorization issued for
34 the provision of goods and services including, but not limited to,
35 construction; manufacturing; energy generation, transmission, or
36 distribution; real estate development; operation of a business; or the
37 provision of goods or services by an executive branch department or
38 agency of the State.

39 "State entity" means any department or agency in the executive
40 branch of State government, including, but not limited to, any
41 board, commission, corporation, authority, or entity thereof.²

42
43 ²a. If an application for a permit, license, or certification, or
44 any combination thereof, requires the review of multiple State
45 entities, the Governor, or the Governor's designee, shall designate a
46 lead State entity to oversee the review of that application.

47 b. The lead State entity shall, to the extent permitted by law:

1 (1) coordinate communication between the applicant and
2 participating State entities;

3 (2) identify reasonably anticipated State approvals;

4 (3) establish a coordinated review schedule;

5 (4) facilitate concurrent reviews where legally and
6 administratively feasible;

7 (5) identify and facilitate resolution of conflicting or duplicative
8 information requests among State entities; and

9 (6) provide the applicant with information concerning the status
10 of required State approvals.

11 c. (1) If an application for a permit, license, or certification, or
12 any combination thereof, requires the review of multiple State
13 entities, the applicant may request a pre-application conference.
14 Any State entity participating in the review of the application shall
15 participate in the conference to the maximum extent practicable.

16 (2) The conference shall identify anticipated approvals,
17 application requirements, sequencing issues, opportunities for
18 concurrent review, and any potential issues that may delay
19 consideration of the application.

20 (3) Any statements or guidance provided during the course of a
21 pre-application conference shall not constitute approval of the
22 application and shall not limit the ability of any State entity to issue
23 a determination for the application.

24 d. The provisions of this section shall not transfer or diminish
25 the statutory authority of any State entity, modify approval
26 standards for any permit, license, or certification, require approval
27 of any application for a permit, license, or certification, alter any
28 legally required public notice or participation, or supersede federal
29 law.²

30
31 ²³. a. The Governor's Office, or an appropriate State entity
32 designated by the Governor, shall establish an online permitting and
33 licensing performance dashboard that is accessible to the public no
34 later than two years after the effective date of this act, P.L. , c.
35 (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill). The
36 dashboard shall display, at a minimum, for each type of permit,
37 license, and certification the:

38 (1) issuing State entity;

39 (2) application fee;

40 (3) statutory, regulatory, or other legal authority governing the
41 length of time within which the State entity shall process
42 applications;

43 (4) target application processing times established pursuant to
44 subsection b. of section 1 of this act, P.L. , c. (C.) (pending
45 before the Legislature as this bill);

46 (5) median processing times during the preceding 12 months;

47 (6) percentage of completed applications receiving final
48 determinations with the applicable processing time; and

1 (7) number of applications pending a determination past the
2 applicable processing time.

3 b. The dashboard shall display the information required
4 pursuant to subsection a. of this section in a manner consistent with
5 all applicable federal and State statutory and regulatory
6 requirements. The Governor's Office, or an appropriate State entity
7 designated by the Governor, shall update the dashboard on at least a
8 quarterly basis.²

9
10 ^{24.} a. Beginning two years after the effective date of this act,
11 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill),
12 and biennially thereafter, the Governor, or the Governor's designee,
13 shall submit to the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991,
14 c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), a report analyzing the performance of State
15 entities in processing applications for permits, licenses, and
16 certifications.

17 b. The report may incorporate, by reference, information
18 publicly available through the online permitting and licensing
19 performance dashboard established pursuant to section 3 of this act,
20 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill),
21 and shall not be required to reproduce information otherwise
22 available through the dashboard. The report shall include, at a
23 minimum:

24 (1) the number, and aggregate dollar amount, of application fees
25 refunded;

26 (2) the number of applications administratively escalated;

27 (3) the number of applications requiring a multi-entity review;

28 (4) identification of categories of permits, licenses, and
29 certifications that routinely exceed applicable processing times,
30 including the principal causes of the recurring delays; and

31 (5) recommendations concerning statutory, regulatory,
32 technological, staffing, or administrative changes to improve the
33 processing of applications.

34 c. All reports prepared pursuant to this section shall be made
35 publicly available.²

36
37 ^{25.} Nothing in this act, P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before
38 the Legislature as this bill), shall:

39 a. require or authorize approval of an application that fails to
40 satisfy applicable law;

41 b. create automatic or deemed approval due to a State entity's
42 failure to act within an established processing period;

43 c. modify, waive, or diminish substantive environmental,
44 public health, worker safety, consumer protection, professional
45 qualification, land use, or other legal or regulatory standards;

46 d. eliminate legally required public notice, comment, hearing,
47 or participation requirements;

1 e. supersede federal law or federally mandated processing
2 requirements; or

3 f. transfer statutory decision-making authority from the State
4 entity legally responsible for issuing the applicable permit, license,
5 certification, or approval.²

6

7 ²6. This act shall take effect on the 180th day after the date of
8 enactment.²