

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

County Government with a Unified Voice

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, and Historic Preservation
Committee

DATE: March 5, 2012

RE: SENATE, NO. 1451 (*Weinberg D-37*)

The New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC) is a strong advocate for transparency and openness in local government; and, supports the concept of S-1451 to provide the public with greater access to meetings and information about meetings. However, NJAC is primarily concerned with the fact that this legislation does not contain an appropriation to address the costs associated with providing adequate notice and preparing accurate meeting minutes for subcommittees meetings, which the bill generally defines as any subordinate committee of a public body. As you know, freeholders typically serve on such subcommittees that meet on a regular and consistent basis throughout the course of the year, and of which may include committees for economic development, family services, public safety, etc.

For example, one of our counties noted that it holds approximately 115 committee meetings each year that total 100 hours. The County pays a transcribing service of \$275.00 per meeting appearance; and, \$5.50 per transcribed page. The transcriber typically completes 90 double-spaced transcribed pages per hour. Based on these figures, the County estimates that it would cost approximately \$49,500.00 per year to comply with this legislation [$\$5.50 \text{ per transcribed page} * 90 \text{ transcribed pages per hour} * 100 \text{ hours} = \$49,500$]. As a result, the County submits that this legislation would require it to hire one additional full-time employee to attend committee meetings, and prepare, proof, and maintain meeting minutes. Please note that the above sum does not include advisory boards, which would likely double the projected cost.

With this in mind, NJAC respectfully requests that the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee have the opportunity to review this legislation in more detail to determine its fiscal impact on local governing bodies. NJAC is committed to advocating for legislation, regulations, and policy directives that empower county governments to operate more effectively and efficiently. As a non-partisan organization that represents the only true regional form of government in the State with a unified and proactive voice, NJAC is dedicated to advancing innovative programs and initiatives for the sole purpose of saving valuable taxpayer dollars. Thank you for your time and consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact us at (609) 394 - 3467 with any questions or concerns.

