

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

County Government with a Unified Voice

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee

DATE: May 17, 2012

RE: **SENATE, NO. 611** (*Sweeney D-3*)

The New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC) commends Senate President Sweeney for his efforts to provide adults with developmental disabilities with meaningful opportunities to successfully transition from post secondary school to productive adult work lives.

As the Committee is well aware, this legislation would require that each county establish a county-based center for the transition of young adults with developmental disabilities and is modeled after the Adult Center for Transition (ACT) in Gloucester County. The County recently established this initiative to serve adults in the mild-to-moderate range of disabilities by collaborating with its county college, vocational-technical school, special services commission, and office of disability services.

Although ACT effectively provides young disabled adults with specific guidance to assist them through a critical period in life, counties across the State may already provide the necessary services called for under this legislation. More specifically, many counties may already utilize a network of public and non-profit agencies such as a County ARC, the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR), or a county Workforce Investment Board (WIB) to provide essential school transition-to-employment opportunities for young adults with disabilities.

Although this legislation is certainly well intended, it may impose additional expenses on counties for outreach and orientation materials, program administration, and resources to assess project effectiveness through both process and outcome. With this in mind, NJAC recommends the following language as a means to address the legislation's lack of funding and potential to create duplicative services in counties with comprehensive transition-to-employment programs.

Section 2.a. of the bill should be amended as follows: 2.a. ^{NJAC}If such transition services are not readily available and demonstrable through a network of public and non-profit agencies, such as, but not limited to, a county ARC, the New Jersey Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, a county Workforce Investment Board, or other appropriate entity,^{NJAC} the governing body of a county, by resolution or ordinance, as appropriate, shall: (1) establish a county-based center for transition for developmentally disabled young adults up to the age of 24 to experience a more successful transition from secondary school to adult employment; and (2) appoint a person qualified by training and experience to direct and administer the adult center for transition.

The proposed language would seem to capture the legislation's original intent, but protects counties with well established programs from incurring potential expenses. Thank you for your time and consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact us at (609) 394-3467 with any questions or concerns. 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.