ASSEMBLY COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3034

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 22, 2024

The Assembly Commerce, Economic Development and Agriculture Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 3034.

This bill requires the Department of Agriculture to advertise and promote aquaculture products as part of the Jersey Fresh Program. The Jersey Fresh Program is the marketing and quality grading program that is currently used, by the department, to advertise and promote the availability of fruit and vegetable agricultural commodities that have been produced in the State and graded for quality. This bill would expand the Jersey Fresh Program to additionally include marketing for fish and shellfish that are produced in the State, or in State waters, through means of aquaculture, and the quality of which complies with standards adopted by the department and is verified thereby through the use of an appropriate quality grading system. The bill would require the department to develop and implement a quality grading system that is specific to the grading of aquaculture products, as distinguished from wild-caught seafood products, which system is to be consistent with, and similar to, the quality grading system that is used, by the department, to grade the quality of other agricultural commodities for the purposes of the Jersey Fresh Program.

The bill provides an initial appropriation of $100,000 for the bill's purposes, and it additionally provides for an annual appropriation of $100,000 to be made in each fiscal year after the bill's effective date, in order to facilitate the ongoing marketing and promotion of aquaculture products under the Jersey Fresh Program. The monies made available under the bill would be in addition to any other monies that may be appropriated or allocated to the Jersey Fresh Program.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.