

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3

A JOINT RESOLUTION directing the Commissioner of Education to contract with an independent entity to conduct an evaluation of the Department of Education and its oversight capacity.

WHEREAS, During the course of its deliberations, the Joint Legislative Committee on Public School Funding Reform heard testimony regarding the need to ensure that all school districts are in compliance with State statutory and regulatory requirements and that State funds provided to local school districts are being properly expended; and

WHEREAS, The Joint Legislative Committee on Public School Funding Reform expressed a concern that the Department of Education may lack an adequate level of staffing and other resources to fulfill its important oversight responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, There is particular concern about the capacity of the offices of the county superintendents of schools, which have maintained minimal staffing levels despite being assigned an increasing number of oversight responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, These deficiencies seriously undermine the department's ability to hold local school districts accountable and conduct the type of oversight which taxpayers rightfully expect, and to provide the technical and other assistance to school districts that may be necessary to improve and enhance the educational achievement of students; and

WHEREAS, A reorganization of the department may be warranted to better enable the department to identify and correct problems within school districts in a timely and proactive manner; and

WHEREAS, In order to ensure increased school district accountability and enhanced student achievement, an evaluation of the Department of Education should be conducted that will identify measures to improve the capacity of the department to oversee the operation of school districts and to respond immediately and effectively to operational and educational issues which may arise; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. The Commissioner of Education shall enter into a contract with an independent entity to authorize that entity to conduct a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the Department of Education in order to identify those organizational and staffing deficiencies that limit the department's ability to provide effective oversight of school districts; and to develop recommendations for the reorganization of the department that will improve the capacity of the department to oversee the operation of school districts and to respond immediately and effectively to operational and educational issues that may arise.

b. The commissioner shall identify existing resources to finance the evaluation required pursuant to subsection a. of this section and shall expend, with the approval of the Office of Management and Budget in the Department of the Treasury, an amount not to exceed \$750,000 for the purpose of that evaluation.

c. The commissioner shall present the evaluation, its recommendations for the reorganization of the department, and the commissioner's response to those recommendations within six months of the effective date of this resolution.

2. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 29, 2007.