

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 373

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 23, 2014

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 373.

This bill requires that all public elementary and secondary schools be equipped with a panic alarm for use in a school security emergency including, but not limited to, a non-fire evacuation, lockdown, or active shooter situation. The panic alarm, which will not be audible within the school building, must be directly linked to law enforcement authorities and must immediately transmit a signal or message to the authorities upon activation. The bill defines “panic alarm” as a silent security system signal generated by the manual activation of a device intended to signal a life-threatening or emergency situation that requires a response from law enforcement.

The bill also requires that all public elementary and secondary schools be equipped with a red emergency light that is affixed to the exterior of the school building in a highly visible location above or near the front entrance visible from the nearest public roadway or, if the school building is not visible from the nearest public roadway, then on that roadway. The bill requires that the emergency light be linked to the school’s panic alarm so that it turns on when the panic alarm is activated.

The bill directs that the proceeds of bonds authorized to be issued to fund the State share of the costs of Schools Development Authority district school facilities projects or the State share of the costs of school facilities projects in all other districts, including county vocational school districts, be used to fund the full cost of the panic alarms and emergency lights.

As reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2091, which also was reported by the committee on this same date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

In the Legislative Fiscal Estimate for the bill, the Office of Legislative Services (OLS) notes that the bill would not lead to an expenditure increase for the State. Under current law, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority is authorized to issue bonds to finance the State share of school construction projects in the State. Under this bill, a portion of those bond proceeds would be used to

finance the installation of the panic alarms and emergency lights. The cost of installing a panic alarm in a school appears to vary considerably, ranging from \$1,000 per school to \$5,000 per school. There are approximately 2,500 schools in the State, suggesting that between \$2.5 million to \$12.5 million in bond proceeds may be used for this purpose. School districts may incur minimal ongoing maintenance costs after the equipment is installed.