

# SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

**SENATE, No. 2754**

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2754 (1R).

This bill directs the Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the Superintendent of the Division of State Police, the Director of the Division of Highway Traffic Safety, the Chief Administrator of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, and the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, to study school bus passenger safety.

Specifically, the study will evaluate: (1) the safety of school bus passengers involved in emergency situations, including school bus accidents (such as head-on, rear-end, and side-impact collisions and situations where the school bus may roll over); (2) safety technologies, including speed restrictors, automatic braking, electronic stability control, and event data recorders, that are available in newly manufactured school buses or may be installed in school buses after manufacture; and (3) the qualifications for school bus drivers, including age, physical fitness requirements, and necessary experience.

Moreover, the study will evaluate: (1) statutory and regulatory requirements relating to school bus safety, (2) oversight of school bus operations, including vehicle maintenance, bus driver qualifications, and audits of school districts and contractors, and (3) current policies, plans, and procedures implemented by school districts.

Finally, the Commissioner of Education must prepare and submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor, within 120 days of the bill's date of enactment, that summarizes the findings of the study and makes recommendations to improve school bus passenger safety.

As reported, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 4224 (1R), as also reported by the committee.

### FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill provides a broad scope of areas to investigate in the required study which may require the agencies to hire an outside entity to perform the research, such as a university or research institute. Depending upon how the agencies structure a potential research contract, the cost of the study can vary. The cost will also be determined, to some degree, by the bids submitted by potential

research partners and the capacity of those researchers. This uncertainty makes it difficult to narrow in on a specific estimate. The bill only provides 120 days to conduct and finalize the research, which will play a role in limiting overall costs and scope.

A review of past studies and reports generated by State agencies that have investigated statutory and regulatory requirements, policies, and procedures have generally ranged from \$50,000 to \$500,000. It is reasonable to expect the study required by the bill to cost a similar amount, but towards the higher end of the range given that the study is broad in its scope of safety topics.