

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4433

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

DATED: MARCH 2, 2021

SUMMARY

Synopsis:	Creates grant program to encourage school districts to partner with institutions of higher education in training school-based mental health services providers.
Type of Impact:	Annual State expenditure increase; annual local school district revenue increase
Agencies Affected:	Department of Education; local school districts; institutions of higher education; Department of Children and Families

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact		
State Expenditure Increase		Indeterminate
Local School District Revenue Increase		Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill may result in an indeterminate increase in annual State expenditures, from federal or other State funds, to establish the program and provide grants to local school districts. The bill does not specify the number of grants that will be awarded annually or the amount of the grants, and it is unknown how many applications will be received and approved. The increase in State expenditures, excluding administrative costs, would correspond to a revenue gain for local school districts selected for grants under the bill.
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- The bill does not appropriate State funds for the program; however, it includes a provision requiring the Department of Education (DOE) to annually apply for and use any federal grant funds or other federal assistance that may be available to be used for the grant program prior to using other State funds.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill establishes a grant program to assist school districts in the training of school-based mental health services providers to expand the pipeline of high-quality, trained providers and address the shortages of mental health professionals in school districts. School districts that receive a grant under the program will use the funds for efforts to create and grow programs that train students who are attending graduate school to become school-based mental health services providers. School-based mental health services providers are defined under the bill as State-licensed or certified school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, or other mental health professionals qualified under State law to provide mental health services to children and adolescents.

Prior to applying for the grant program, a school district or a group of school districts seeking to participate in the program together is required to form a partnership with one or more institutions of higher education that offer graduate programs in school-based mental health fields. The partnership would allow a student enrolled in the graduate program to perform applicable fieldwork, credit hours, internships, externships, or other related training.

The Commissioner of Education will establish selection criteria for the awarding of grants under the program, including consideration of various information regarding the need for school-based mental health professionals and an increased level of student mental health services and supports. In awarding grants, priority will be given to high-need school districts, which will be designated according to criteria established by the Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education.

Under the bill, the DOE is required to annually apply for and use any federal grant funds or other federal assistance which may be available to be used for the grant program including, but not limited to, funds under the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. Any federal grant funds awarded to the DOE will first be used to provide grant awards to school districts, prior to using State funds.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS concludes that this bill may result in an indeterminate increase in annual State expenditures, from federal or other State funds, to establish the program and provide grants to local school districts. The bill does not specify the number of grants that will be awarded annually or the amount of the grants, and it is unknown how many applications will be received and approved. The increase in State expenditures, excluding administrative costs, would correspond to a revenue gain for local school districts selected for grants under the bill. The bill does not appropriate State funds for the program; however, it includes a provision requiring the DOE to annually apply for and use any federal grant funds or other federal assistance that may be available to be used for the grant program prior to using other State funds.

The OLS notes that the grant program established under the bill is substantially similar in concept to the federal Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program, which is administered by the United States Department of Education (USDOE). The Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program provides competitive grants to support and

demonstrate innovative partnerships to train school-based mental health service providers for employment in schools and local educational agencies. The most recent information published on the USDOE's website concerning awards under the program indicates that, in fiscal year 2020, two New Jersey school districts received funding. The Newark Board of Education received a \$350,829 grant and the Pennsauken School District received a \$325,766 grant.

Section: Education

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).