

# ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### **ASSEMBLY, No. 4435**

with committee amendments

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: DECEMBER 14, 2020

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 4435 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill requires the School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) to give priority to certain school districts in awarding grants under the program. The Department of Children and Families' Office of School-Linked Services within the Division of Family and Community Partnerships currently administers the SBYSP. The program is located within host schools and coordinates with existing resources in the community. SBYSP services include: mental health counseling; employment counseling; substance abuse education/prevention; preventive health awareness including pregnancy prevention; primary medical linkages; learning support; healthy youth development; recreation; and information/referral.

Under the bill, priority for SBYSP grants will first be given to applicant school districts that operate or host a center or other entity that focuses on providing individual, family, and group clinical mental health counseling services to students. The center or other entity will: be separate from, but integrated into, a school within the applicant school district; be open for students to visit clinical mental health professionals before, during, and after regular school hours; and include clinical mental health professional staff, who may be school district employees, that provide mental health counseling services to students either in-person or remotely through the use of telehealth or telemedicine services.

Of those school districts that operate or host, or plan to operate or host, a mental health counseling center, the Office of School-Linked Services will consider certain factors enumerated in the bill in determining further priority in awarding grants under the SBYSP. Those factors include: whether the school district is designated as a "high-need" school district, as determined by the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families; the existence of a partnership between the center and community mental health providers and other community resources; whether the school district has developed a plan for mental health professionals working in its center to develop curricula to train students and staff

on identifying the signs of mental health conditions and addressing risk factors that may impact student mental health; and whether the center or other entity created by the school district has, or demonstrates a plan to have, clinical mental health professional staff who specialize in a variety of mental health areas.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to require that a center or other entity operated by an applicant school district given priority under the bill will include clinical mental health professional staff, who may be school district employees, that provide mental health counseling services to students. As introduced, the bill required that a center or other entity be staffed by clinical mental health professionals, who are school district employees.