

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 780

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 3, 1997

The Assembly Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 780 [1R] with committee amendments.

As amended by committee, this bill requires the Commissioner of Education to identify and publish a list of local boards of education, educational services commissions, county special services school districts, and any other established agencies providing cooperative transportation services. Any school district responsible for the transportation of county vocational school pupils or special education pupils to and from a school, other than a local district school, would utilize one of the agencies identified by the commissioner for the transportation of the pupils. The district would not be required to utilize one of the agencies if the district can provide the transportation at a lower cost or the transportation to be provided by the agencies does not fall within the policies of the resident school district regarding length of ride and the assignment of students to a route based on student age or classification.

The bill also provides that any school district which has in the prior year provided payments in lieu of transportation for any nonpublic school pupil or which cannot provide transportation in the ensuing school year must attempt to provide transportation through an agency identified by the commissioner prior to determining to pay aid in lieu of transportation. The school district shall provide to the agency with any unique limitations or restrictions of the required transportation. If the costs to provide transportation by the agency identified by the commissioner are less than the in-lieu-of payments, the agency would provide transportation. The school district is to make its determination on the manner in which transportation services shall be provided and notify the nonpublic school and the parent or guardian of the nonpublic school pupil of that determination by August 1 prior to the beginning of the school year.

The county superintendents are required to assist local boards of education and the chief school administrators of nonpublic schools in coordinating the calendars and schedules of the public and nonpublic

schools to facilitate the coordination of pupil transportation in a county. Also, the bill directs the commissioner to report to the Governor and the Legislature within three years on its effectiveness in promoting regionalized transportation services and the advisability of expanding its provisions to transportation services provided to other students.

The committee amended the bill to limit the application of its provisions in public school districts to the provision of transportation services to special education students and students transported to a county vocational school. The amendments also provide for the application of the bill's provisions in nonpublic school transportation to those situations in which the school district may not be able to provide transportation in the ensuing school year in addition to prior year aid in lieu of situations. The amendments also provide that the school district will provide any unique limitations or restrictions to the agency in regard to the nonpublic school transportation services which the district requires and that the district would not have to make use of the transportation services of the agencies for its public school transportation needs if those services did not fall within the policies of the resident school district regarding length of ride and assignment of students to a route based on student age or classification. The amendments provide that the district must make a determination on the manner in which it will provide its nonpublic school transportation services and notify the nonpublic school and the parents of the nonpublic school pupils by August 1 prior to the beginning of the school year. The amendments also require the commissioner to report to the Governor and the Legislature within three years on the bill's effectiveness in promoting regionalized transportation services students and the advisability of expanding its provisions to transportation services provided to other pupils.

As amended by committee, this bill is identical to the Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill Nos.2391 and 1689.