

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 820

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 2, 1996

The Senate Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 820.

This bill establishes a program for a case study of the governance and organization of public school districts on a pilot basis, using a single county as a demonstration project. Under the bill, the study would be done in Hunterdon County. The study would be undertaken by an advisory committee consisting of 28 members, including four municipal officials, a freeholder, two members of the general public, two regional high school board members, two elementary school board members, a member of the county vocational school board, three chief school administrators, a high school principal, two school business administrators, two teachers, the superintendent of the Educational Services Commission, a member of the State Board of Education, and the county superintendent of schools, all from the county, and five public members from other counties in the State. The Commissioner of Education and the members of the Legislature representing the county would be ex-officio, non-voting members of the committee.

The committee is to conduct a study of the organization and governance of the school districts within the county; examine possible inefficiencies resulting from the duplication of administrative functions and other causes; review the demographic patterns within the county with regard to space utilization within the schools; study the potential impact and cost effectiveness of an integrated technology system on the quality and availability of educational opportunities; examine possible alternatives to the current governance or organization of the county's school system, including a county-wide school district, the division and recombination of municipal school districts, alterations of the current regional high school structure, the establishment of county-wide magnet schools, the creation of charter schools or any other changes or innovations which would make the schools in the county more efficient; and review the statutes to determine what changes would be necessary or appropriate to facilitate structural changes in the organization and governance of the school districts within the county.

The committee is to ensure that all recommendations maintain local choice and local options, and would improve education in the school system.

The bill appropriates \$250,000 for the work of the committee.