

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1467

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 10, 1997

The Senate Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1467.

This bill provides the authority for modernizing and consolidating educational audiovisual aids centers. Recognizing that educational technology has greatly advanced from the 16mm film which was the principal media in the 1950's, the bill renames the centers as instructional media and educational technology services centers. The bill would permit the consolidation of these centers by providing the authority for two or more county centers to merge to form a regional center, and the authority for either a county center or a regional center to merge with an existing shared services organization.

The bill continues the vesting of the supervision, management and control of a county center in a county commission, whose eight members would serve without compensation. However, in light of the difficulty that commissions have in filling vacancies, the bill would remove the quotas that establish first and second-class members. Rather, the six members would either be chosen from the membership of the boards of education of the participating school districts or would be appropriately certificated persons employed by those districts. As under existing law, the seventh member is the librarian member, and the county superintendent would now be a member ex officio, but with the authority to vote only in case of a tie vote. At the meeting of the county school board association immediately preceding July 1 in each year, two members would be elected to the commission to serve a term of three years. The term of an elected library member would be increased from one to three years.

The supervision, management and control of a regional center would be vested in a regional commission, whose membership would consist of an odd number of not fewer than seven members as determined by the commission. The members would consist of three classes: county members, who may be either school board members or appropriately certificated persons employed by a participating district in a participating county and for whom the number per county would depend on the total number of participating counties; one librarian member; and members-at-large. The county members of the regional commission would be elected at the meeting of each county school board association of the participating counties prior to July 1. A

county superintendent would be designated to serve as a member ex officio, but with the authority to vote only in case of a tie vote, and the county superintendent would also serve as secretary.

A county or regional commission could merge with a shared services organization that agrees to provide services to the same jurisdiction to which the commission provides services. In that case, the organization of the shared services organization would replace the organization of the county or regional commission. Upon organization, the county superintendent or superintendents of the participating county or counties would declare the county or regional commission dissolved and must notify all participating districts of the shared services organization's assumption of the commission's obligations.

The bill also expands the powers and duties of a commission and includes references to software, repairing equipment, and educational technology to reflect the increased range of services which may be provided. In addition, the entities with which a commission may contract has been expanded to provide flexibility in tailoring services to create contractual relationships that are maximally beneficial to the contracting parties.

The funding mechanism would likewise be flexible. Core lending services would be structured as assessments against the participating school districts on the basis of resident pupil enrollment as under existing law, and other services could be structured as a direct charge for contractually defined services. When the commission uses the assessment method, the bill provides the commission with the authority to establish minimum or maximum assessments. Assessments would take into account sending- receiving relationships and charter schools to ensure that assessments are based on students actually benefitting from services provided by the commission.

If there is no existing commission providing services to a county, a board of education wishing to participate in a commission could elect to join an existing county or regional commission in another county. The bill also has provisions regulating the dissolution of a county commission.