

FISCAL NOTE TO
SENATE, No. 1753

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JULY 25, 1997

Senate Bill No 1753 of 1996 would require the Director of Educational Services of the Office of Education in the Department of Corrections to establish compulsory remedial reading programs for school age inmates who are reading below grade age level. The bill also specifies that inmates who successfully complete remedial reading programs are to be given commutation time for good behavior or work credits. The bill authorizes the director to establish criteria and procedures for determining an inmate's success in the remedial reading program. The criteria and procedures, which are to be based on an inmate's individual needs and capabilities, are to be routinely reviewed by the Department of Education.

The Department of Corrections states that participation in educational program is compulsory for school aged pupils in the State's juvenile institutions. Participation for school aged pupils housed in the State' youth and adult facilities is "strongly encouraged" but not required.

The department further states that while it would not be necessary to establish new remedial reading programs, it would be necessary to enhance the current level of services in order to accommodate those individuals who are not currently active in the existing school program. Based on the current number of school-aged pupils in the youth and adult institutions who demonstrated reading deficits of sufficient severity to warrant placement into remedial reading programs, the department projects that at least an additional 420 pupils would be required to participate in the program. Based on a ratio of 12 pupils in each of 5 daily sessions per teacher, the department projects that an additional 7 teachers at an annual salary and fringe benefits cost of \$373,027 would be required. Educational materials at a cost of \$200 per pupil would total \$84,000 per year, for a total annual cost of \$457,027.

The department notes that the bill would also generate commutation time and work credits for program participants, thus decreasing the inmate's length of stay in the correctional facility. No estimate was provided of the cost savings created by these credits.

The Office of Legislative Services concurs and adds that the cost to house an inmate in a State institution is about \$26,000 per year.

This fiscal note has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.