

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4264

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 17, 2021

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 4264 (1R).

This bill establishes a five-year Clayton Model Pilot Program in the Department of Education to provide a social emotional learning program to elementary school students attending selected public schools. The pilot program would be based on the Clayton Model, which is a responsive, trauma-informed intervention program for student development that was created by the Clayton School District in Gloucester County.

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education would select three counties to participate in the pilot program: (1) one county to represent the northern area of the State; (2) one county to represent the central area of the State; and (3) Gloucester County to represent the southern area of the State. After each county is selected, the commissioner, in collaboration with the Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers University-Camden, would select a maximum of 10 schools within each county to participate in the pilot program.

The bill also establishes a six-member steering committee to provide accountability and guidance concerning the policies and practices associated with the implementation of the pilot program. This steering committee would, at a minimum, include the following members: (1) a representative of the Department of Education; (2) two members of the public with expertise in issues related to the work of the committee, one appointed by the Senate President and one appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly; (3) the Superintendent of Schools of the Clayton School District; (4) the Director of the Child Connection Center; and (5) a representative of the Senator Walter Rand Institute appointed by the commissioner upon the recommendation of the institute. The commissioner would be permitted to appoint additional members to the steering committee with expertise in issues related to the work of the commission as deemed necessary.

Under the bill, the Clayton School District would serve as the model site for the pilot program. The bill requires the Clayton School District to support the accurate communication of the model to administrators and teachers in participating schools, and design and

conduct the training for county-level social emotional learning coordinators.

Additionally, the bill requires the county special services school district, educational services commission, or jointure commission serving each participating county to manage the social emotional learning program in the county. The districts, educational services commissions, and jointure commissions would be required to hire social emotional learning coordinators to train and organize the placement of social emotional learning specialists (e.g., social workers, behavioral health care providers, or other social emotional learning professionals) who would provide the social emotional learning supports in participating schools.

The commissioner would provide interim reports during each year of the pilot program to the State Board of Education, the Governor, and the Legislature including the costs of the pilot program to date, the number and names of the school districts and schools participating in the pilot program, the number of students served under the pilot program, and such other information that the commissioner deems appropriate.

The Senator Walter Rand Institute would also be required to develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot program, which evaluation would include a cost-benefit analysis. The bill requires the institute to report the results of the evaluation to the commissioner and the steering committee no later than six months following the conclusion of the pilot program. After receiving these results, the commissioner would be required to report to the Governor and Legislature concerning the implementation and effectiveness of the pilot program, which report would include a recommendation regarding the continuation or expansion of the program.

Federal funds would be used to support implementation of years one and two of the Clayton Model Pilot Program. Federal funds would first be utilized to support years three through five of the program. An appropriation of State funds could be made to support implementation of the program for years three through five if federal funds are insufficient to cover program costs.

As reported by the committee, Assembly Bill No. 4264 (1R) is identical to Senate Bill No. 2486 (1R), which also was reported by the committee on this date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that the bill would result in an indeterminate annual increase in expenditures for school districts and certain county special services school districts, educational services commissions, or jointure commissions that participate in the Clayton Model Pilot Program.

School districts that operate an elementary school participating in the pilot program are expected to incur annual increases in expenditures associated with the implementation of social emotional learning strategies under the Clayton Model during the five-year program. According to the Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers University-Camden, these annual costs could equal \$80,000 to \$100,000 per school, or \$142 per student.

The employment of social emotional learning coordinators is expected to increase the annual personnel costs of each county special services school district, educational services commission, or jointure commission that participates in the pilot program. According to the Senator Walter Rand Institute, these annual cost increases could range from approximately \$12.6 million to \$27.5 million, collectively, depending on which counties participate in the program.

The OLS also notes that the Department of Education could incur indeterminate expenditure increases to the extent that the implementation and evaluation of the pilot program require additional administrative expenses. The bill stipulates that federal funds will be utilized to support implementation of years one through five of the pilot program, and appropriation of State funds may occur to support implementation for years three through five if federal funds are insufficient to cover program costs in those years.