

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4856

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: NOVEMBER 8, 2021

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Assembly Bill No. 4856 (2R).

This bill establishes accessibility standards for the Internet websites and web services of school districts, charter schools, renaissance schools, and the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf (“public school”).

Specifically, the bill requires that no public school will make available to the enrolled students of the district or school or to the public an Internet website or web service unless the website or web service complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA or the most up-to-date version of the guidelines if approved by the Commissioner of Education, or any other applicable guidelines or requirements as may be designated or approved by the commissioner. The WCAG guidelines provide standards through which digital content may be accessible for persons with disabilities. In June 2018, the WCAG 2.1 guidelines were issued to improve accessibility guidance for three major groups: users with cognitive or learning disabilities, users with low vision, and users with disabilities on mobile devices.

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education would be required to establish a procedure for determining whether an Internet website or web service complies with the WCAG guidelines. The Department of Education would be responsible for issuing certifications of compliance to attest that an Internet website or web service complies with these requirements.

The bill provides that when a public school establishes an Internet website or web service after the effective date of this bill, the school would be required to receive a certification of compliance. Under the bill, an Internet website or web service established by a public school after the effective date of the bill would be permitted to operate while pending certification. The bill also requires a public school to certify or recertify the compliance of each Internet website or web service operated by the public school every two years following the effective date of the bill.

The bill provides that nothing in the bill would be construed to bar, exclude, or otherwise affect any right or action that exists under the State “Law Against Discrimination.”

As defined in this bill, the term “Internet website or web service” includes any webpage, website, web service online curriculum, or online third party or open educational resource product that is made available to enrolled students or the public by a public school through the Internet.

As reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 3094, which was amended and reported by the committee on this same date.