

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5126

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 9, 2021

The Assembly Agriculture Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 5126 (1R).

This bill, as amended, requires the Commissioner of Education to prepare two reports on the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on public schooling. The first report will be a learning loss report that identifies and quantifies the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on student academic outcomes. The second report will be a report on the continuation of school services during the same period.

Under the bill, the commissioner must collect data on student academic outcomes from all school districts within thirty days of the bill's effective date. The commissioner will require each school district to submit the required data within 30 days of the bill's effective date. The data must be provided for all students enrolled in the school district in the time period beginning on the date of the school district's closure in March of 2020 and ending on the bill's effective date, unless otherwise specified by the commissioner.

The bill, as amended, directs the commissioner to prepare and submit a report to the Governor and to the Legislature by May 31, 2022. The learning loss report must:

(1) identify and quantify the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on overall student academic outcomes, and include an analysis disaggregated by district size, grade level, and academic subject, where practicable; and

(2) identify and quantify the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on student achievement disparities that existed prior to the public health emergency, and include an analysis of student academic outcomes disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch under the National School Lunch Program, eligibility for special education services, and English language learner designation, where practicable.

The bill restricts the commissioner's use of the collected data to the bill's purposes.

The bill also directs the commissioner to require each school district to submit data and information related to the continuation of school services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The school district must submit the data and information to the commissioner within 90 days of the bill's effective date. The data and information must be provided for the time period beginning on the date of the school district's closure in March of 2020 and ending on the bill's effective date. Under the bill, the required data will include, but need not be limited to:

- the dates of any extended and intermittent pauses of academic instruction taken as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- a description of the instructional format provided by the school district;
- for any remote learning provided, data on the amount of class time students spent in synchronous and asynchronous learning formats;
- data on class sizes for each instructional format used by the district and the amount of any small group or one-on-one instruction delivered;
- data and information on student and teacher access to reliable Internet and technology;
- high school graduation rates;
- information on any standardized assessment administered to students between March of 2020 and the fall of 2021;
- the attendance rates and attendance policy applied by the school district;
- information on the continuity of special education services;
- a description of the professional development opportunities provided to school district teachers and staff;
- the number of students who received free or reduced-price meals;
- information on any district-sponsored child care programs;
- information on current and projected teacher shortages; and
- types of social-emotional supports provided to students, teachers, and staff and participation rates of these programs.

Where available, the school district must provide data that is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch under the National School Lunch Program, eligibility for special education services, English language learner designation, and grade level.

The bill, as amended, provides that by September 30, 2022, the commissioner must prepare and submit to the Governor and the Legislature a final report that summarizes the collected information. The final report will be a comprehensive overview of the continuation of school services during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The bill limits the commissioner's use of the collected data and information to the bill's purposes.

As amended and reported, the bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 3214 (1R), as also amended and reported by the committee.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amendments:

1) postpone the due date for the submission by the Commissioner of Education of a learning loss report from May 31, 2021 to May 31, 2022;

2) postpone the due date for the submission by the Commissioner of Education of the final report on the continuation of school services during the COVID-19 public health emergency from September 30, 2021 to September 30, 2022; and

3) require that each school district provide to the Commissioner of Education information on any standardized assessment administered to students between March of 2020 and the fall of 2021.