

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 508

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: MARCH 9, 2021

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 508.

This bill will require school districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools to provide for an annual written or verbal substance use screening on each high school student. The screening will assess the student's risk for substance abuse using the screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT) program. If the student screens positive for potential substance misuse, the person administering the screening will be required to provide brief counseling using motivational interviewing and assist the student with referral to treatment options, if needed. The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families, using existing public and private training resources, will make available to school districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools, training for personnel using the SBIRT program.

Under the provisions of the bill, the parent or guardian of a student being screened must be given prior written notice of the screening and an opportunity to have the student opt out of the screening. The bill also includes a provision regarding the privacy of information collected during the screening. Statements made by a student during a screening are considered confidential information and cannot be disclosed by a person receiving the statement to any other person without the prior written consent of the student and the student's parent or guardian, except in cases of immediate medical emergency or if disclosure is otherwise required by State law.

A school district, charter school, or nonpublic school is permitted to opt out of the SBIRT program required pursuant to the bill, if it is implementing an alternative screening program and provides to the Department of Education a detailed description of the alternative program and the reasons why the SBIRT program is not appropriate for its use.

The State Board of Education, in conjunction with the Commissioner of Human Services, will promulgate regulations to effectuate the provisions of this bill, including standards pursuant to which the SBIRT program will be conducted.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.