

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1857

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 9, 2021

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 1857 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes a five-year Community Schools Pilot Program in the Department of Education. Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education would issue a request for proposals to identify a nonprofit organization located in the State to manage the pilot program. The selected organization would be responsible for providing technical assistance to any school district or charter school that is participating in the pilot program, and would be responsible for making group training sessions and information about community schools available to any district or charter school that is interested in establishing a community school. Additionally, the organization and the department collaboratively would be responsible for selecting up to 50 schools, including charter schools, that would receive direct assistance from a site coordinator assigned to the school.

The commissioner would annually enter into a contract with an independent entity to perform an audit of the organization's accounts and financial transactions. The audits, which must be completed no later than five months following the organization's fiscal year, would be posted on the Department of Education's website. The bill also requires that the commissioner enter into a contract with an independent entity to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program. The final report, which the organization would forward to the Governor and the Legislature, would be due no later than six months prior to the conclusion of the pilot program.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to provide that:

- (1) the organization, in coordination with the Department of Education, will develop specific criteria, in addition to an application procedure, for selecting schools to participate in the pilot program;
- (2) the selection criteria developed by the organization and the department will be posted on the department's website at least 20 days prior to each application period; and
- (3) the schools will be selected to participate in the pilot program by the department and organization collaboratively.