

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 3479

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 13, 2021

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 3479.

This bill establishes in the Department of Education the Alleviating Learning Loss in New Jersey Grant Program. The purpose of the grant program is to provide funds to school districts, charter schools, and renaissance schools for the creation or expansion of summer learning programs and other student support programs during the summer of 2021 and the 2021-2022 school year. The programs are to address student learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 related school closures or the use of virtual or remote instruction.

A school district, charter school, or renaissance school seeking funds under the Alleviating Learning Loss in New Jersey Grant Program is required to submit an application to the Commissioner of Education. When selecting districts or schools for funding under the grant program, the commissioner is required to give priority to school districts, charter schools, and renaissance schools that: 1) have not established for the summer of 2021 a summer learning program; and 2) have a student population in which 20 percent or more of the students enrolled in the district or school are eligible for free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the federal School Breakfast Program.

Under the bill, an application submitted to the commissioner will include a general description of a summer learning program to be established or expanded for the summer of 2021 or of any other student support program to be established or expanded for the 2021-2022 school year. The general description will, at a minimum, detail how the creation or expansion of a program will address learning loss resulting from COVID-19 related school closures or the use of virtual or remote instruction. An application will also detail the instruction, learning supports and services, and other integrated supports and services that will be provided to participating students. Further, an application will include: a description of any student eligibility criteria or prioritization under a program; an estimate of the number of students who will participate in a program to be established or expanded during the summer of 2021 or the 2021-2022 school year, as applicable; and an estimate of the total cost associated with establishing or expanding a program.

To the extent permitted by federal law, grants awarded under the grant program would be paid from the monies received by the State under the federal “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act” or any other financial assistance provided by the federal government to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on elementary and secondary schools.

As reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 5147, which also was reported by the committee on this same date.