

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 180

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 7, 2022

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 180 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill requires the Attorney General, in consultation with the New Jersey Education and Law Enforcement Working Group, to establish a program that provides a means for the public to anonymously report information concerning unsafe, potentially harmful, dangerous, violent, or criminal activities in schools or the threat of those activities. The program will allow students, parents, school staff, and other community members to anonymously report information through readily accessible methods such as a telephone tip line, that is staffed by trained individuals at reasonable hours each day of the week, and a mobile application. The program must ensure that the identity of the reporting party remains unknown, except in instances where the reporting party voluntarily discloses his identity and verifies that his identity may be shared with law enforcement officers, school officials, and employees operating the program. The bill requires that information received through the program be promptly shared with the appropriate law enforcement agencies or school officials.

Under the bill, training will be provided to law enforcement dispatch centers, school districts, nonpublic schools, and other entities determined by the Attorney General on awareness of the program and appropriate response to tips received through the program. Proper guidelines will be provided to students regarding the procedures for reporting potential threats to school safety. In addition, program awareness and education materials will be provided to all public and nonpublic schools in the State. The program established under this bill would be similar to Colorado's "Safe2Tell" program, which provides an anonymous and readily accessible tool for the reporting and sharing of information regarding potential threats to school safety.

This bill also requires the Attorney General to annually prepare a report on the program that includes, but is not limited to, the following: (1) the total number of reports made to the program, disaggregated by subgroups to be determined by the Attorney General; (2) the dates, times, and means of reporting; (3) the total

number of instances of misuse of the program; and (4) a summary of the outcomes and actions taken on reports made to the program. The Attorney General is required to submit the report to the Governor and the Education Committees of the Senate and General Assembly and post the report on the Internet website of the Department of Law and Public Safety by January 1 of the year immediately following issuance of the report.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2022-2023 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- require that the Attorney General work in consultation with the New Jersey Education and Law Enforcement Working Group to establish a program that provides a means for the public to anonymously report information concerning unsafe, potentially harmful, dangerous, violent, or criminal activities in schools or the threat of those activities;
- specify that a telephone tip line be staffed by trained individuals at reasonable hours each day of the week; and
- require that proper guidelines be provided to students regarding the procedures for anonymously reporting information concerning potential threats to school safety.