

# ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### ASSEMBLY, No. 398

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 8, 2022

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 398 with committee amendments.

As amended by the committee, this bill establishes the Office of Dropout Prevention and Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth in the Department of Education. The amended bill requires the office: to collaborate with school districts in the development of a Statewide strategic plan to address the problem of student dropouts; recommend and develop programs to prevent students from dropping out of school; and address issues associated with the reenrollment of students who have left school prior to graduation.

The amended bill also establishes the Student Dropout Prevention Task Force to analyze the causes of students leaving school prior to graduation, recommend to school districts best practices for reducing the student dropout rate, and develop strategies to increase the reenrollment of students who have left school. The task force is required to, at a minimum:

- a. examine current data, including the age, ethnicity, and gender of student dropouts, research, programs, and initiatives concerning student dropouts;
- b. examine the reasons why students leave school, including possible contributing factors such as household income, cultural or language barriers, or being a child from a single parent household;
- c. identify effective ways for school districts to reduce the number of students who leave school prior to graduation and increase student engagement while in school;
- d. develop mechanisms to increase the reenrollment of students who have left school; and
- e. develop recommendations on the most effective ways for school districts to support students in order to prevent them from leaving school.

The 18-member task force consists of the Commissioners of Education and Corrections; two members of the Senate, one from each political party; two members of the General Assembly, one from each political party; one representative from the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation; three superintendents of schools, one each from an urban, suburban, and rural school

district; two presidents of New Jersey county colleges; two members of the public with demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the task force; two members employed at a high school in an urban school district with a high student dropout rate, one of whom will be a principal and one of whom will be a guidance counselor; and two teachers, one of whom will be employed in an urban school district with a high student dropout rate. The task force is to issue a final report to the Governor and to the Legislature containing its findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for legislation that it deems appropriate, no later than nine months after the task force organizes.

This bill was prefiled 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:

1) require that the Office of Dropout Prevention and Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth address issues associated with the reenrollment of students and develop programs to facilitate the return of students to the classroom;

2) to include additional dropout factors to be considered by the task force, including the age, ethnicity, and gender of student dropouts, as well as potential dropout factors such as household income, cultural or language barriers, or being a child from a single parent household;

3) increase the task force to 18 members by including a representative from the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation; and

4) to make several technical changes.