

ASSEMBLY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1181

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 14, 2022

The Assembly Higher Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1181 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill provides that, beginning with the 2022-2023 grade 11 class, and for two school years thereafter, the State Board of Education will require that the local graduation requirements adopted by a board of education or a board of trustees of a charter school include the requirement that a student, or the student's parent or guardian, if applicable, complete and submit a financial aid application in a form prescribed by the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) as a prerequisite to the student receiving a high school diploma unless a waiver is submitted to the school district or charter school. A student will be exempt from the requirement if the student, or the student's parent or guardian, submits to the school district or charter school:

(1) a waiver form signed by the parent or guardian, or by the student if the student is at least 18 years of age, requesting the exemption of the requirement; or

(2) if the student is under 18 years of age and a form signed by the parent or guardian cannot be reasonably obtained, the student's school counselor may authorize the waiver as permitted by regulations promulgated by the Commissioner of Education.

The Executive Director of HESAA, in consultation with the commissioner, will provide a list of resources for school districts, parents, and students that include instructions on how to complete a financial aid application prescribed by the authority. The executive director of the authority will make available such resources as are necessary directly to school counselors or other school employees who assist students in completing the financial aid application, who will share the information with students and with the students' parents or guardians.

Each school district will annually notify students and the parents or guardians of the requirement established by the bill.

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:

- provide that the provisions of the bill will apply to the 2022-2023 grade 11 class, and for two school years thereafter;
- provide that the form will serve as a prerequisite to the student receiving a high school diploma from a public high school or charter school unless a waiver is submitted to the school district or charter school;
- provide that, if the student is under 18 years of age and a form signed by the parent or guardian cannot be reasonably obtained, a student will be exempt from the requirement if the student's school counselor authorizes the waiver as permitted by regulations promulgated by the Commissioner of Education;
- provide that the Executive Director of HESAA, in consultation with the commissioner, will provide a list of resources for school districts, parents, and students that include instructions on how to complete a financial aid application prescribed by the authority. The information is required to be shared with students and with the students' parents or guardians;
- specify that no adverse action is to be taken by a board of education or a board of trustees of a charter school against any student who is exempted from the requirement to complete and submit a financial aid application;
- provide that nothing in the bill will be construed as requiring school counselors, or any other school employee, to assist students in completing the financial aid application, and that nothing will be construed as creating a private right of action against the school district or State upon compliance or noncompliance;
- delete the requirement that DOE will verify which students have met the requirement; and
- delete the requirement that DOE will include information on the number of students who have met the requirement in the School Report Card issued under current law.