

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1516

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 22, 2022

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1516 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes certain requirements specific to school counselors and school counseling programs at institutions of higher education and establishes the position of State School Counselor Liaison in the Department of Education (DOE).

Under this bill, the State Board of Education will require school counseling programs at regionally accredited colleges and universities that lead to a school counseling certificate to incorporate the following: (a) the American School Counselor Association's national model for school counseling programs or another State-approved model, and (b) training in the delivery of social and emotional learning programming as well as postsecondary and career planning.

The bill outlines the role of a school counselor, which is defined as an individual who holds a New Jersey standard educational services certificate with a school counselor endorsement.

The bill directs the State board to establish professional development requirements for school counselors and, as part of the professional development requirements, require that each school counselor complete professional development training in areas related to the duties of a school counselor including, but not limited to, the promotion of mental health awareness, suicide prevention, crisis-intervention, trauma-informed counseling practices, cultural competency and responsiveness, the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports, delivery of social and emotional learning programming, and college and career readiness.

Finally, this bill directs the Commissioner of Education to appoint a State School Counselor Liaison to work with school districts and school counselors to facilitate best practices by advancing comprehensive school counseling services that address the mental and behavioral health and wellness of all students. The person appointed to the position is required to hold a standard educational services certificate with a director of school counseling services endorsement and possess experience in the delivery of social and emotional learning programming as well as

postsecondary and career advisement. The State School Counselor Liaison will collaborate with other State agencies and associated stakeholders and perform the following duties:

- serve as a liaison and resource expert in school counseling and comprehensive school counseling services;
- foster and promote professional development for school counselors;
- monitor, interpret, synthesize, and disseminate relevant information associated with changes in school counseling practices, legislation, and legal issues that impact school counselors; and
- initiate, participate in, and utilize research studies related to school counseling practices, the mental health needs of children and youth, and related issues.

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:

- remove the requirement that school counselors spend at least 80 percent of their staff time during normal school hours providing certain school counseling services;
- make a technical correction to the bill's reference to an IEP;
- remove the requirements that school counselors complete 100 hours of professional development training every five years in areas related to the duties of a school counselor; instead, the amendments require that school counselors complete professional development training generally, as established by the State Board of Education; and
- provide that a school counseling program may incorporate a State-approved model instead of the American School Counselor Association's national model for comprehensive school counseling programs.