

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5307

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 14, 2023

The Assembly Education committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5307.

This bill directs the Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families, to develop and distribute to school districts guidelines for providing mental health services to students. The purpose of the guidelines is to assist school districts in enhancing and improving mental health services for students. Under the bill, the guidelines are to be reviewed and updated annually by the Department of Education. In developing and updating the guidelines, the department is required to seek the input and recommendations of school district administrators, educators, mental health professionals, and other appropriate stakeholders.

The guidelines established under the bill, at minimum, are to include recommendations on:

- (1) implementing a quality-based multi-tiered student mental health system of care that prevents mental health concerns and mitigates trauma;
- (2) establishing sustainable school partnerships with community mental health service providers;
- (3) providing mental health services to English language learners;
- (4) providing culturally sensitive mental health services;
- (5) incorporating new technology and innovations into existing mental health services including, but not limited to, providing mental health services to students through virtual or remote means;
- (6) evaluating the effectiveness of available student mental health services;
- (7) identifying and maximizing the use of available State, federal, nonprofit, and private funding to support a multi-tiered student mental health system of care; and
- (8) the ratios of student mental health providers to students.

Under the bill, the Department of Education is to post the guidelines on its Internet website. The bill also requires the Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families, to create and maintain a database consisting of available mental health resource providers throughout the State. The database is to be available to school districts, as well as students and their families.