ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1055

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 17, 2021

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1055 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes a five-year Community Schools Pilot Program in the Department of Education. Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education would issue a request for proposals to identify a nonprofit organization located in the State to manage the pilot program. The selected organization would be responsible for providing technical assistance to any school district, renaissance school, or charter school that is participating in the pilot program, and would be responsible for making group training sessions and information about community schools available to any district, renaissance school, or charter school that is interested in establishing a community school. Additionally, the organization and the Department of Education would be responsible for selecting up to 50 schools, including renaissance and charter schools, that would receive direct assistance from a site coordinator assigned to the school.

The organization, in coordination with the Department of Education, would develop an application procedure and specific criteria for selecting schools to participate in the program and receive direct support from a site coordinator. The selection criteria would be posted on the department's website at least 20 days prior to the beginning of each application period. Schools would be selected in three application periods by both the department and the organization collaboratively. In each of the first and second application periods, no more than 15 schools would be selected to receive a site coordinator. In the third application period, no more than 20 schools would be selected to receive a site coordinator. The organization, in collaboration with the department, may increase the number of schools selected in a subsequent application period if the maximum number was not selected in a prior application period. At no time would the cumulative number of schools selected to receive a site coordinator exceed 30 after the second application period or 50 after the third application period. In selecting schools to receive a site coordinator, lower priority may be given to a school district, renaissance school, or charter school that is currently receiving

federal funds to establish or operate a community school while higher priority may be given to a school located in a school district that does not have any schools in which a site coordinator has been assigned. The organization would employ and train individuals who would be assigned to serve as a site coordinator in a school selected to receive one. Those selected to be site coordinators would be required to be employees of the organization, and not the school district, renaissance school, or charter school to which they are assigned. The organization may enter into an agreement with another nonprofit entity to assist it in providing technical assistance to participating schools, conducting training sessions, providing materials to interested schools, and selection of program participants.

The commissioner would annually enter into a contract with an independent entity to perform an audit of the organization's accounts and financial transactions. The audits, which must be completed no later than five months following the organization's fiscal year, would be posted on the Department of Education's website. The bill also requires that the commissioner enter into a contract with an independent entity to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program. The final report, which the organization would forward to the Governor and the Legislature, would be due no later than six months prior to the conclusion of the pilot program.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 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:

- clarify that renaissance schools would be eligible to participate in the program;
- provide that the nonprofit organization selected to manage the program would also develop, in coordination with the Department of Education, specific criteria for selecting schools;
- require that selection criteria be posted on the Department of Education's website at least 20 days prior to each application period;
- clarify that schools would be selected to participate in the program by both the Department of Education and the nonprofit organization selected to manage the pilot program collaboratively; and
- provide that, in selecting schools to receive a site coordinator, lower priority may be given to a school district, renaissance school, or charter school that is currently receiving federal funds to establish or operate a community school while higher priority may be given to a

school located in a school district that does not have any schools in which a site coordinator has been assigned.