ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3394

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 17, 2021

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 3394 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill makes revisions to current law that requires the State Department of Education to prepare curriculum guidelines for the teaching of civics for use by local school boards in implementing the two-year high school course of study in the history of the United States required under N.J.S.18A:35-1 and N.J.S.18A:35-2. The bill directs the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, The State University to prepare curriculum guidelines and provide professional development for high school social studies teachers in fulfilling the requirement of integrating civics, economics, and the history of New Jersey into the United States history course.

The bill requires the provision of civics instruction to middle school pupils in public schools. Current law requires a course of study in civics, geography, and the history of New Jersey to be provided to public school elementary students, but no similar requirement exists for middle school pupils. Under the bill, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, each board of education is required to provide a course of study about the values and principles underlying the American system of constitutional democracy, the function and limitations of government, and the role of a citizen in a democratic society. The course is to be taken by all pupils in an appropriate middle school grade. The course of study must include a minimum of two quarters of instruction, or the equivalent.

The bill also directs that the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, the State University will provide a clearinghouse of materials, an online resource center, technical assistance, professional development and any other activities to encourage the integration of civics, economics, and New Jersey history in the required high school course in the history of the United States and to enhance the teaching of civics in middle school required pursuant to the bill.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to the Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill Nos. 854 and 237, which was also reported by the committee on this date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to remove the requirement that a minimum of $300,000 be annually appropriated to the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, The State University. The committee amended the bill to instead require that the Legislature annually appropriate to the New Jersey Center for Civic Education such sums as are necessary to effectuate the purposes of the bill.