SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4435

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 13, 2021

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Assembly Bill No. 4435 (1R) with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill requires the School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) to give priority to certain school districts in awarding grants under the program. The Department of Children and Families' Office of School-Linked Services within the Division of Family and Community Partnerships currently administers the SBYSP. The program is located within host schools and coordinates with existing resources in the community. SBYSP services include: mental health counseling; employment counseling; substance abuse education/prevention; preventive health awareness including pregnancy prevention; primary medical linkages; learning support; healthy youth development; recreation; and information/referral.

Under the bill, priority for SBYSP grants will first be given to new applicant school districts and school districts seeking to expand current programs that include in their application a center or other entity that focuses on providing individual, family, and group clinical mental health counseling services to students. The center or other entity will: offer access to mental health counseling services during, before, or after school hours and provide access to clinical mental health professional staff, that may be school district employees, that provide mental health counseling services to students either in-person or remotely through the use of telehealth or telemedicine services, as applicable. Under the bill, the Office of School-Linked Services will give priority consideration to new applicant school districts and districts seeking to expand current programs that offer these services immediately upon the effective date of the bill.

Of those new applicant school districts and school districts seeking to expand current programs, the Office of School-Linked Services will consider certain factors enumerated in the bill in making a determination when awarding grants under the SBYSP. Those factors include: whether the school district is designated as a

"high-need" school district, as determined by metrics set by the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families; the existence of a partnership between the center and community mental health providers and other community resources; whether the school district has developed a plan for mental health professionals working in its center to develop curricula to train students and staff on identifying the signs of mental health conditions and addressing risk factors that may impact student mental health; and whether the center or other entity created by the school district has, or demonstrates a plan to have, clinical mental health professional staff who specialize in a variety of mental health areas.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2717, which was amended and reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

(1) provide that when awarding grants under the School Based Youth Services Program, the Office of School-Linked Services within the Division of Family and Community Partnerships of the Department of Children and Families will give priority to new applicant school districts and districts seeking to expand current programs that include in their application a center or other entity that focuses on providing individual, family, and group clinical mental health counseling services to students and that offers access to mental health counseling services during, before, or after school hours and that offers access to clinical mental health professional staff, who may be school district employees, that provide mental health counseling services to students; and

(2) specify that the Office of School-Linked Services will give new applicant school districts and districts seeking to expand current programs that meet the above requirements priority immediately upon the effective date of the bill.