

# ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### ASSEMBLY, No. 5147

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 24, 2021

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5147.

This bill establishes in the Department of Education the Alleviating Learning Loss in New Jersey Grant Program. The purpose of the grant program is to provide funds to school districts, charter schools, and renaissance schools for the creation or expansion of summer learning programs and other student support programs during the summer of 2021 and the 2021-2022 school year. The programs are to address student learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 related school closures or the use of virtual or remote instruction.

A school district, charter school, or renaissance school seeking funds under the Alleviating Learning Loss in New Jersey Grant Program is required to submit an application to the Commissioner of Education. When selecting districts or schools for funding under the grant program, the commissioner is required to give priority to school districts, charter schools, and renaissance schools that: 1) have not established for the summer of 2021 a summer learning program; and 2) have a student population in which 20 percent or more of the students enrolled in the district or school are eligible for free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the federal School Breakfast Program.

Under the bill, an application submitted to the commissioner will include a general description of a summer learning program to be established or expanded for the summer of 2021 or of any other student support program to be established or expanded for the 2021-2022 school year. The general description will, at a minimum, detail how the creation or expansion of a program will address learning loss resulting from COVID-19 related school closures or the use of virtual or remote instruction. An application will also detail the instruction, learning supports and services, and other integrated supports and services that will be provided to participating students. Further, an application will include: a description of any student eligibility criteria or prioritization under a program; an estimate of the number of students who will participate in a program to be established or expanded during the summer of 2021 or the 2021-2022 school year, as applicable; and an estimate of the total cost associated with establishing or expanding a program.

To the extent permitted by federal law, grants awarded under the grant program would be paid from the monies received by the State under the federal “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act” or any other financial assistance provided by the federal government to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on elementary and secondary schools.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill would result in an indeterminate, one-time expenditure of federal funds provided to the Department of Education. The expenditure of federal funds by the department would correspond to a revenue gain for local school districts selected for funds under the bill.

The bill does not appropriate State funds for the program; however, it includes a provision requiring that grants to school districts under the bill be paid from financial assistance provided by the federal government to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on elementary and secondary schools.

The OLS notes that the most likely sources of federal funds that could currently be utilized in the provision of grant funds under the bill are State “set-aside” funds provided under the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) I and II Funds initiatives established in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act.