ASSEMBLY BUDGET COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5814

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 22, 2021

The Assembly Budget Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5814 (1R).

This bill creates the School Bus Safety Ombudsman position in, but not of, the Department of Education to monitor and administer all school bus safety and oversight activities. The School Bus Safety Ombudsman will be appointed by the Governor and will have, but not be limited to, the following duties:

- review a school bus driver's information collected by the Commissioner of Education for a criminal history check or check for alcohol and drug-related motor vehicle violations pursuant to current statute;
- review all training certifications for school bus drivers from employers;
- assist in the development of a student information card;
- review statements provided by a board of education or contractor that verify a school bus driver, whose bus driver's license is suspended or revoked, no longer operates a school bus for the board or contractor;
- the establishment of a publicly accessible database that compiles the violations and subsequent fines of a school bus driver, the school bus contractor that employs the school bus driver, and any owner, operator, or officer associated with the school bus contractor. The ombudsman will develop and implement an appeal mechanism to resolve any dispute raised concerning inclusion in the database;
- maintaining a list of persons debarred from bidding on pupil transportation contracts;
- render a decision as to whether a person is to be debarred from bidding on a pupil transportation contract;
- collect and review the name, address, and contact information of school bus contractors and the owner or school bus contracting companies;
- determine if a board of education or contractor has approved or assigned an unauthorized bus driver;
- review and recommend changes to the commissioner of the rules and regulations governing school bus safety; and
- any other duties the ombudsman deems appropriate to ensure the safety of school buses for students in the State.

The bill also requires the ombudsman to submit an annual report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission which includes a summary of the services provided, and enforcement actions taken, by the ombudsman during the school year, and any specific recommendations the ombudsman deems appropriate and necessary concerning the oversight and management within the ombudsman's purview.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fiscal information is not available at this time.