

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 316

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 13, 2020

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 316 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes the Office of Dropout Prevention and Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth in the Department of Education. The bill requires the Office of Dropout Prevention and Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth to: collaborate with school districts in the development of a Statewide strategic plan to address the problem of student dropouts; recommend and develop programs to prevent students from dropping out of school; and address issues associated with the reenrollment of students who have left school prior to graduation.

This bill also establishes the Student Dropout Prevention Task Force. The task force will, at a minimum:

- a. examine current data, research, programs, and initiatives concerning student dropouts;
- b. examine the reasons why students leave school;
- c. identify effective ways for school districts to reduce the number of students who leave school prior to graduation and increase student engagement while in school;
- d. develop mechanisms to increase the reenrollment of students who have left school; and
- e. develop recommendations on the most effective ways for school districts to support students in order to prevent them from leaving school.

The 17-member task force will include the Commissioners of the Department of Education and the Department of Corrections; two members of the Senate, one from each political party; two members of the General Assembly, one from each political party; three superintendents of schools, one each from an urban, suburban, and rural school district; two presidents of New Jersey county colleges; two members of the public with demonstrated expertise in issues relating to the work of the task force; two members employed at a high school in an urban school district with a high student drop out rate, one of whom will be a principal and one of whom will be a guidance counselor; and two teachers, one of whom will be employed in an urban school district with a high student drop out

rate. The task force will issue a final report to the Governor and to the Legislature containing its findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for legislation that it deems appropriate, no later than nine months after the task force organizes.

The committee amended the bill to provide greater detail on the issues that the Student Dropout Prevention Task Force will be required to examine.

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.