

SENATE, No. 552

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator RICHARD J. CODEY

District 27 (Essex and Morris)

Senator STEPHEN M. SWEENEY

District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Greenstein and Ruiz

SYNOPSIS

Establishes competitive grant program for school districts to assist in hiring of school psychologists; appropriates \$1 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ACT** establishing a school psychologist grant program,
2 supplementing chapter 40 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes, and making an appropriation.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. a. There is established in the Department of Education a
9 grant program to assist school districts in the hiring of school
10 psychologists. The purposes of the grant program shall be to:
11 address shortages of student support services in New Jersey
12 schools; ensure that mental health services are available at school
13 for students who may otherwise lack access to such services;
14 improve student achievement; and improve school climate and
15 school safety.

16 b. Grants under the program shall be awarded to school
17 districts on a competitive basis. School districts that receive a grant
18 under the program shall use the funds for the hiring of school
19 psychologists to provide support services for students enrolled in
20 the schools of the district.

21 c. To be eligible for consideration of a grant award, a school
22 district shall submit an application to the Commissioner of
23 Education, in accordance with application procedures and
24 requirements prescribed by the commissioner. A grant application
25 shall include information regarding the following:

- 26 (1) the school district's unmet need for student support services;
27 (2) the number of school psychologists currently employed by
28 the district and their caseloads;
29 (3) the existing ratio of school psychologists to students enrolled
30 in the district;
31 (4) the schools and student populations that will be served by
32 the hiring of additional school psychologists with grant funds;
33 (5) the school district's attendance rates and graduation rates;
34 (6) the percentage of students enrolled in the district who are
35 eligible for the federal free or reduced price lunch programs; and
36 (7) any other information specified by the commissioner.

37 d. The commissioner shall establish selection criteria for the
38 awarding of grant funds under the program, including consideration
39 of the information listed in subsection c. of this section. Grants
40 shall be awarded based upon review of the applications and subject
41 to the availability of funds. The commissioner shall establish the
42 amount for each grant that is approved.

43 e. Within one year after receiving a grant award under the
44 program, a school district shall submit a report to the commissioner
45 containing information on the district's use of the grant funds. The
46 report shall include, at a minimum, information on the number of
47 school psychologists hired using grant funds, increases or
48 improvements in the provision of student support services as a

1 result of the grant, and any notable changes in school climate,
2 attendance rates, student achievement, school discipline, or other
3 measures since receiving the grant.

4
5 2. The commissioner shall submit a report to the Governor, and
6 to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
7 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than two years after the establishment of
8 the school psychologist grant program. The report shall include,
9 but need not be limited to, information on the number of grant
10 applicants, the number and amounts of the grant awards,
11 information provided by school districts under subsection e. of
12 section 1 of this act, and any recommendations concerning the
13 continuation or expansion of the grant program.

14
15 3. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
16 Department of Education the sum of \$1,000,000 for the purpose of
17 effectuating the provisions of this act. Any appropriations that are
18 not expended at the end of the fiscal year shall be available to be
19 used for the same purpose in subsequent fiscal years.

20
21 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

22
23
24 STATEMENT

25
26 This bill establishes a \$1 million grant program in the
27 Department of Education to assist school districts in the hiring of
28 school psychologists. The purposes of the grant program are to
29 address shortages of student support services in New Jersey
30 schools, ensure that mental health services are available at school
31 for students who may otherwise lack access to such services,
32 improve student achievement, and improve school climate and
33 school safety.

34 Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education will award grants
35 to school districts on a competitive basis. School districts that wish
36 to apply for the grant program will submit an application in
37 accordance with procedures and requirements prescribed by the
38 commissioner. Grant applications must include information on the
39 following: (1) the school district's unmet need for student support
40 services; (2) the number of school psychologists currently employed
41 by the district and their caseloads; (3) the existing ratio of school
42 psychologists to students enrolled in the district; (4) the schools and
43 student populations that will be served by the hiring of additional
44 school psychologists with grant funds; (5) the school district's
45 attendance rates and graduation rates; (6) the percentage of students
46 enrolled in the district who are eligible for the federal free or
47 reduced price lunch programs; and (7) any other information
48 specified by the commissioner. The commissioner will establish

1 selection criteria for the awarding of grants, including consideration
2 of the information contained in the applications, and will determine
3 the amount for each grant that is approved.

4 The bill requires each school district that receives a grant under
5 the program to submit a report to the commissioner within one year
6 after receiving the grant. The report will contain information on the
7 school district's use of the grant funds, including information on the
8 number of school psychologists hired, increases or improvements in
9 the provision of student support services as a result of the grant, and
10 any notable changes in school climate, attendance rates, student
11 achievement, school discipline, or other measures since receiving
12 the grant.

13 The bill also requires the commissioner to submit a report to the
14 Governor and the Legislature no later than two years after the
15 establishment of the grant program. The report will include
16 information on the number of grant applicants, the number and
17 amounts of the grant awards, information provided by school
18 districts in their reports to the commissioner regarding the use of
19 grant funds, and any recommendations concerning the continuation
20 or expansion of the grant program.

21 The bill appropriates the sum of \$1 million from the General
22 Fund to the Department of Education for purposes of the grant
23 program established under the bill.