SENATE, No. 742

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Senator ANTHONY M. BUCCO
District 25 (Morris and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes "Responsible School Violence Prevention, Preparation, and Protection (RSVP-3) Pilot Program."

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

AN ACT concerning threats of school violence and supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

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

1. a. There is established in the Department of Law and Public Safety a three-year "Responsible School Violence Prevention, Preparation, and Protection Pilot Program," which would train law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, teachers and other school staff, and students to identify and report behaviors that signal potential threats to school safety with the intention of preventing school violence. The pilot program shall be established in the counties of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, and Union and in cities of the first class.

b. The Attorney General shall work in collaboration with the Commissioners of Health and Education to accomplish the goals of the pilot program which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) the creation of a threat assessment measurement tool for use by law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, teachers and other school employees, and students to evaluate a potential threat of school violence;

(2) the development of a scientifically based school violence threat assessment and management training curriculum concerning the identification of behaviors that indicate a potential risk of school violence and the need to report these behaviors;

(3) the delivery of the school violence threat assessment and management training curriculum to law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, teachers and other school employees, and students;

(4) the development of an effective mechanism to immediately report an identified threat of school violence; and

(5) the establishment of procedures for addressing and eliminating an identified threat of school violence.

c. The Attorney General shall submit to the Governor and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), a report containing an evaluation of the pilot program not more than one year after the implementation of the pilot program, and annually thereafter for a total of three years. The report shall recommend whether the pilot program should be continued as a Statewide program.

2. There shall be appropriated from the general fund such funds as are necessary to implement the provisions and to effectuate the purposes of this act.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes in the Department of Law and Public Safety a three-year "Responsible School Violence Prevention, Preparation, and Protection (RSVP-3) Pilot Program" in the counties of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, and Union and in cities of the first class, which include Jersey City and Newark. This program is designed to train law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, teachers and other school staff, and students to identify and report behaviors that signal potential threats to school safety with the intention of giving the school community the tools it needs to detect and prevent school violence before it occurs. According to the sponsor, this bill is intended to provide the State with an opportunity to learn the most effective ways to prevent school shootings from occurring in New Jersey and fulfill its duty to provide a thorough and efficient education that is safe and secure.

Following the mass shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, the United States Secret Service and the United States Department of Education launched a collaborative effort through the Safe School Initiative to perform an extensive examination of 37 incidents of targeted school shootings and school attacks that occurred in the United States from 1974 through May 2000. The focus of the Safe School Initiative was on examining the thinking, planning, and other behaviors of students who carried out school attacks, with particular attention given to identifying pre-attack behaviors and communications that might be detectable and could assist in preventing some future attacks.

The RSVP-3 pilot program builds upon on an initiative developed in Morris County that is based on many of the key findings of the Safe School Initiative. This bill requires the Attorney General to work in collaboration with the Commissioner of Health and Commissioner of Education to accomplish the goals of the pilot program which include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) the creation of a threat assessment measurement tool for use by law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, teachers and other school employees, and students to evaluate a potential threat of school violence;

(2) the development of a scientifically based school violence threat assessment and management training curriculum concerning the identification of behaviors that indicate a potential risk of school violence and the need to report these behaviors;

(3) the delivery of the school violence threat assessment and management training curriculum to law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, teachers and other school employees, and students;

(4) the development of an effective mechanism to immediately report an identified threat of school violence; and

(5) the establishment of procedures for addressing and eliminating an identified threat of school violence.

The Attorney General is required to submit to the Governor and the Legislature an annual report containing an evaluation of the pilot program and a recommendation as to whether the pilot program should be continued as a Statewide program.

In addition, the bill provides for an appropriation from the general fund in the amount necessary to implement the provisions and effectuate the purposes of the bill.