

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE, No. 2383

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 7, 2020

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably a Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 2383.

This substitute requires the Commissioner of Education to establish a three-year “Bridge Year Pilot Program,” under which each school district with a high school shall offer students in the graduating class of 2021 and the graduating class of 2022 the opportunity to pursue a bridge year during the year immediately following senior year of high school. Nonpublic schools may elect to participate in the pilot program. The purpose of the pilot program is to provide participating students an opportunity to address learning loss and missed opportunities in extracurricular activities, including spring sports programs, as a result of the public health state of emergency caused by the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

A student in the graduating class of 2021 or the graduating class of 2022 who has met all applicable high school graduation requirements by the end of the senior year of high school may elect to pursue a bridge year. A student who intends to pursue a bridge year will notify their host high school’s bridge year liaison, who is required to be designated by the host high school, of their intent no later than the first day of the second semester of the student’s senior year of high school. The host high school will permit students participating in the bridge year to participate in graduation ceremonies with the graduating class of 2021 or class of 2022 as applicable and to receive their diplomas. To be eligible to participate in the bridge year program, a student must be 19 years of age or younger and not turn 20 years of age at any time during the bridge year, except that a classified student will be eligible to participate if the student will turn 20 years old during the bridge year due to services provided under the student’s individualized education program.

A student pursuing a bridge year will remain enrolled in the host high school while participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. A bridge year liaison is required to develop, in consultation with a student pursuing a bridge year, an individual learning plan (ILP) for the student. The ILP will define academic and co-curricular goals for the bridge year and detail activities and strategies for accomplishing those goals.

During each of the fall and spring semesters of the student's bridge year, a student will take between nine and 12 credits at the host high school if an institution of higher education offers courses at that location, the county college that serves the county of the host high school, or a combination. At the conclusion of each semester of the bridge year, the host high school will update the student's high school transcript to reflect any high school credits earned during the bridge year. The student will be considered a non-matriculated student of the county college. A student who pursues a bridge year and participates in a spring sport during the program will enroll in at least nine but less than 12 credits in each of the fall and spring semesters during the student's bridge year. Under the committee substitute, a county college will charge students participating in a bridge year a maximum of \$145 per credit inclusive of all fees, except that fees associated with specific courses or with the use of on-campus science laboratories may be charged at a maximum of \$45 per course. In order to remain in the Bridge Year Pilot Program, the student must maintain a 2.0 grade point average.

Students participating in a bridge year will be eligible for student financial aid under the Tuition Aid Grant Program and the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship Program if they meet all eligibility requirements for those programs other than full-time enrollment in a degree program during the bridge year.

A student who pursues a bridge year will be permitted to participate in a spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) and extracurricular activities at the student's host high school, which is defined under the committee substitute as the high school that the student attended as a junior in high school. A student will not be eligible to participate in any fall or winter sport. A student participating in a spring sport or extracurricular activity during the bridge year will pay applicable student athletics and activities fees and be subject to the host high school's student and athletic codes of conduct and any other applicable rules or policies that other students participating in the spring sport or extracurricular activity at the host high school are required to follow. The substitute directs insurers doing business in the State and issuing liability insurance policies to school districts to provide coverage for bridge year students participating in a spring sport or extracurricular activity, as part of a school district's liability insurance policy.

In order to participate in a spring sport during a student's bridge year, the student must meet the current age participation requirements of the NJSIAA. In the event that a student pursuing a bridge year elects to participate in a spring sport, the student is required to petition the NJSIAA to waive the eight semester rule, under which a student is not eligible for high school athletics after the expiration of eight consecutive semesters following the student's entrance into the ninth grade. The NJSIAA is directed to confer with the National Collegiate

Athletic Association or any other similar entities to ensure that any student participating in a spring sport during a bridge year will be eligible to declare as a college recruit and participate in intercollegiate athletics.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill will lead to an indeterminate increase in State costs, primarily due to the bill's provision which allows students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program to be eligible for State financial aid under the Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) and New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJSTARS) programs. The bill would increase costs to the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority to the extent that high school students graduating in 2021 and 2022, who pursue a bridge year in accordance with the bill's provisions, would be eligible for a grant under the TAG program or a scholarship under the NJSTARS program. The OLS does not have the information necessary to project how many high school graduates would pursue a bridge year and how many of those students would be eligible for financial aid under the TAG and NJSTARS programs.

The OLS also notes that, under the bill, county colleges and four-year institutions of higher education may receive less tuition and fee revenue than they otherwise may have realized, as a result of the bill's provision that requires students participating in a bridge year to be charged a maximum of \$145 per credit inclusive of all fees and a maximum of \$45 in fees associated with specific courses or with the use of on-campus science laboratories.