

SENATE, No. 2415

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 7, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI

District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Weinberg, Diegnan, Greenstein, Stack and Turner

SYNOPSIS

Establishes School Connectivity Grant Program to expand access to online instruction for economically disadvantaged students; makes appropriation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/28/2021)

1 AN ACT establishing the School Connectivity Grant Program,
2 supplementing chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes,
3 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 the
9 “School Connectivity Grant Program” to provide funds to school
10 districts, charter schools, and renaissance schools to expand access
11 to online instruction for economically disadvantaged students. The
12 grant program shall award grants to school districts, charter schools,
13 and renaissance schools to defray the costs, either in whole or in
14 part, associated with purchasing a qualifying reserve of online
15 instruction equipment, as set forth in subsection c. of this section.

16 b. A school district, charter school, or renaissance school may
17 apply to the department for a grant. The grants shall be awarded in
18 amounts determined by the Commissioner of Education. When
19 awarding grants, the commissioner shall give preference to
20 applicants with the largest number of students who lack access to
21 online instruction.

22 c. To qualify for a grant, a school district, charter school, or
23 renaissance school shall agree to purchase and maintain a reserve of
24 one piece of online instruction equipment for every 12 students who
25 were enrolled in the school district, charter school, or renaissance
26 school during the previous school year. For the purposes of this
27 section, one piece of online instruction equipment shall include:

28 (1) one connected device; and

29 (2) one Wi-Fi hotspot, or the provision of mobile broadband
30 Internet access service.

31 d. Notwithstanding any provision of P.L.1968, c.410
32 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), or any other law to the contrary, the
33 commissioner may adopt, immediately upon filing with the Office
34 of Administrative Law and no later than the 90th day after the
35 effective date of this act, such rules and regulations as the
36 commissioner deems necessary to implement the provisions of this
37 act, which regulations shall be effective for a period not to exceed
38 12 months. The regulations shall, at a minimum, set forth the
39 requirements for application submissions, the criteria for
40 application selections, and the eligible uses of grant funds. The
41 regulations shall thereafter be amended, adopted, or readopted by
42 the commissioner in accordance with the provisions of P.L.1968,
43 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).

44 e. As used in this section:

45 “Connected device” means a laptop computer, tablet computer,
46 or similar device that is capable of connecting to broadband Internet
47 access service, either by receiving such service directly or through
48 the use of Wi-Fi.

1 “Mobile broadband Internet access service” means a mass-
2 market retail service by wire or radio that provides the capability to
3 transmit data to and receive data from all or substantially all
4 Internet endpoints, including any capabilities that are incidental to
5 and enable the operation of the communications service, but
6 excluding dial-up Internet access service.

7 “Online instruction equipment” means the equipment necessary
8 for one student to participate in online instruction services at
9 locations other than a school, and includes a connected device, Wi-
10 Fi hotspot, and mobile broadband Internet access service.

11 “Wi-Fi hotspot” means a device that is capable of receiving
12 mobile broadband Internet access service and sharing such service
13 with another device through the use of Wi-Fi.

14
15 2. There is appropriated \$2,000,000 from the General Fund to
16 the Department of Education for the “School Connectivity Grant
17 Program.”

18
19 3. This act shall take effect immediately.
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22 STATEMENT

23
24 This bill establishes the “School Connectivity Grant Program”
25 within the Department of Education to provide funds to certain
26 public schools to expand access to online instruction for
27 economically disadvantaged students.

28 Under the grant program, the department would award grants to
29 school districts, charter schools, and renaissance schools to defray
30 the costs of purchasing a qualifying stockpile of online instruction
31 equipment. Specifically, any grant recipient would be required to
32 purchase and maintain a reserve of one piece of online instruction
33 equipment for every 12 students who were enrolled in the school
34 district, charter school, or renaissance school during the previous
35 school year. For the purposes of this reserve, one piece of online
36 instruction would include (1) one connected device (e.g., a laptop or
37 tablet computer); and (2) one Wi-Fi hotspot, or the provision of
38 mobile broadband Internet access service.

39 Any school district, charter school, or renaissance school may
40 apply to the department for a grant. The grants would be awarded
41 in amounts determined by the Commissioner of Education. When
42 awarding these grants, the commissioner would be required to give
43 preference to applicants with the largest number of students who
44 lack access to online instruction.

45 The bill authorizes the commissioner to adopt emergency
46 regulations within three months of the bill’s effective date to
47 effectuate the purposes of the grant program. At a minimum, these
48 regulations would be required to set forth the requirements for

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1 application submissions, the criteria for application selections, and
2 the eligible uses of financial assistance.

3 The bill also appropriated \$2,000,000 from the General Fund to
4 the department to defray the costs of the grant program.