SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2486

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 25, 2020

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 2486.

This bill establishes a five-year Clayton Model Pilot Program in the Department of Education to provide a social emotional learning program to elementary school students attending selected public schools. The pilot program would be based on the Clayton Model, which is a responsive, trauma-informed intervention program for student development that was created by the Clayton School District in Gloucester County.

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education would select three counties to participate in the pilot program: (1) Morris or Sussex County to represent the northern area of the State; (2) Middlesex or Ocean County to represent the central area of the State; and (3) Gloucester County to represent the southern area of the State. After each county is selected, the commissioner, in collaboration with the Clayton School District and the Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers University-Camden, would select 10 schools within each county to participate in the pilot program.

The bill also establishes a six-member steering committee to provide accountability and guidance concerning the policies and practices associated with the implementation of the pilot program. This steering committee would include the following members: (1) a representative of the Department of Education; (2) two members of the public with expertise in issues related to the work of the committee, one appointed by the Senate President and one appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly; (3) the Superintendent of Schools of the Clayton School District; (4) the Director of the Child Connection Center; and (5) a representative of the Senator Walter Rand Institute appointed by the commissioner upon the recommendation of the institute.

Under the bill, the Clayton School District would serve as the model site for the pilot program. The bill requires the Clayton School District to support the accurate communication of the model to administrators and teachers in participating schools, and design and conduct the training for county-level social emotional learning coordinators.

Additionally, the bill requires the county special services school district in each participating county to manage the social emotional learning program in the county. These districts would be required to hire social emotional learning coordinators to train and organize the placement of social emotional learning specialists (e.g., social workers, behavioral health care providers, or other social emotional learning professionals) who would provide the social emotional learning supports in participating schools.

The Senator Walter Rand Institute would also be required to develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot program, which evaluation would include a cost-benefit analysis. The bill requires the institute to report the results of the evaluation to the commissioner and the steering committee no later than six months following the conclusion of the pilot program. After receiving these results, the commissioner would be required to report to the Governor and Legislature concerning the implementation and effectiveness of the pilot program, which report would include a recommendation regarding the continuation or expansion of the program.