ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2486

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 25, 2021

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2486 (1R) with committee amendments.

As amended, 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) one county to represent the northern area of the State; (2) one 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 Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers University-Camden, would select a maximum of 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, at a minimum, 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. The commissioner would be permitted to appoint additional members to the steering committee with expertise in issues related to the work of the commission as deemed necessary.

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, educational services commission, or jointure commission serving each participating county to manage the social emotional learning program in the county. The districts, educational services commissions, and jointure commissions 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 commissioner would provide interim reports during each year of the pilot program to the State Board of Education, the Governor, and the Legislature including the costs of the pilot program to date, the number and names of the school districts and schools participating in the pilot program, the number of students served under the pilot program, and such other information that the commissioner deems appropriate.

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.

Federal funds would be used to support implementation of years one and two of the Clayton Model Pilot Program. Federal funds would first be utilized to support years three through five of the program. An appropriation of State funds could be made to support implementation of the program for years three through five if federal funds are insufficient to cover program costs.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 4264, which was also amended and reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- require the Commissioner of Education to select, in addition to Gloucester County, one county to represent the northern area of the State and one county to represent the central area of the State to participate in the program;

- require the commissioner to identify a maximum of 10 schools for participation in the program;
- remove the Clayton School District as one of the entities responsible for identifying participants in the program;
- permit the Commissioner of Education to select additional members of the steering committee with expertise in issues related to the work of the committee as deemed necessary;
- permit the educational services commission and jointure commission in each county selected for participation in the program to manage the social emotional learning programming in its county and hire social emotional learning coordinators;
- remove language requiring collaboration with the Department of Education for placement of social emotional learning specialists in participating schools; and
- require that federal funds be utilized to support the implementation of years one and two of the program, require federal funds first be utilized to support years three through five of the program, and allow appropriation of State funds to occur to support implementation of the program for years three through five if available federal funds are insufficient to cover program costs.