

SENATE, No. 2985

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 8, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator ANTHONY M. BUCCO

District 25 (Morris and Somerset)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Cardinale

SYNOPSIS

Requires studies on impact of COVID-19 pandemic on elementary and secondary school attendance and higher education enrollment.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/19/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on
2 elementary and secondary school attendance and higher
3 education enrollment.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. a. The Commissioner of Education shall conduct, or
9 contract with a research institution to conduct, a study to examine
10 the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the attendance of
11 elementary and secondary school students. At a minimum, the
12 study shall analyze:

13 (1) the manner in which school districts, charter schools, and
14 renaissance schools recorded student attendance during the
15 implementation of virtual or remote instruction in the 2019-2020
16 school year and the 2020-2021 school year, respectively;

17 (2) the number of elementary and secondary school students
18 who were identified as chronically absent students or dropout
19 students during the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021
20 school year, respectively, disaggregated by grade level, school
21 district, race, gender, special education designation, English
22 language learner designation, and eligibility for free and reduced
23 price meals;

24 (3) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the
25 implementation of virtual or remote instruction on the attendance
26 rates of elementary and secondary school students during the 2019-
27 2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year, respectively; and

28 (4) the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and the
29 implementation of virtual or remote instruction disproportionately
30 impacted the attendance rates of specific subgroups of elementary
31 or secondary school students.

32 b. The commissioner or research institution, as applicable, may
33 contact a school district, charter school, or renaissance school to
34 obtain any information necessary to conduct the study. If
35 contacted, the school district, charter school, or renaissance school
36 shall provide the commissioner or research institution with such
37 information as may be requested, to the extent practicable.

38 c. (1) Within five days of the completion of the study, the
39 Department of Education shall publish an electronic copy of the
40 study on the Internet website of the department.

41 (2) Within 30 days of the completion of the study, the
42 commissioner shall prepare and submit a report to the Governor,
43 and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
44 (C.52:14-19.1), to summarize the findings of the study.

45 d. As used in this section,

46 “Chronically absent student” means a student who was not
47 present for 10 percent or more of the total school days in session
48 during a given school year.

1 “Dropout student” means a student who was reported as a
2 dropout in the New Jersey School Register as a result of being
3 absent for 10 or more days due to an unknown reason.

4
5 2. a. The Secretary of Higher Education shall conduct, or
6 contract with a research institution to conduct, a study to examine
7 the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enrollment of college
8 and university students in the State. At a minimum, the study shall
9 analyze:

10 (1) the total enrollment of each institution of higher education in
11 the State during the 2019-2020 academic year and the 2020-2021
12 academic year, disaggregated by race, gender, age, residence, and
13 academic program;

14 (2) the undergraduate retention rate of each institution of higher
15 education during the period between the fall 2019 academic
16 semester and the fall 2020 academic semester, disaggregated by
17 race, gender, age, residence, and academic program;

18 (3) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the
19 implementation of virtual or remote instruction on the enrollment
20 rates of college and university students in the State during the 2019-
21 2020 academic year and the 2020-2021 academic year, respectively;
22 and

23 (4) the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and the
24 implementation of virtual or remote instruction disproportionately
25 impacted the rate of enrollment of certain student populations.

26 b. The secretary or research institution, as applicable, may
27 contact any institution of higher education in the State to obtain any
28 information necessary to conduct the study. If contacted, the
29 institution of higher education shall provide the secretary or
30 research institution with such information as may be requested, to
31 the extent practicable.

32 c. (1) Within five days of the completion of the study, the
33 Office of the Secretary of Higher Education shall publish an
34 electronic copy of the study on the Internet website of the office.

35 (2) Within 30 days of the completion of the study, the secretary
36 shall prepare and submit a report to the Governor, and to the
37 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1),
38 to summarize the findings of the study.

39
40 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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43 STATEMENT

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45 This bill requires studies to be conducted to analyze the impact
46 of the COVID-19 pandemic on the attendance of elementary and
47 secondary school students and the enrollment of college and
48 university students, respectively.

1 Specifically, the bill requires the Commissioner of Education to
2 conduct, or contract with a research institution to conduct, a study
3 to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the
4 attendance of elementary and secondary school students. The bill
5 requires school districts, charter schools, and renaissance schools to
6 provide any information that may be requested by the commissioner
7 or research institution, to the extent practicable. At a minimum, the
8 study would analyze:

9 (1) the manner in which school districts, charter schools, and
10 renaissance schools recorded student attendance during the
11 implementation of virtual or remote instruction in the 2019-2020
12 school year and the 2020-2021 school year, respectively;

13 (2) the number of elementary and secondary school students
14 who were identified as chronically absent students or dropout
15 students during the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021
16 school year, respectively, disaggregated by grade level, school
17 district, race, gender, special education designation, English
18 language learner designation, and eligibility for free and reduced
19 price meals;

20 (3) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the
21 implementation of virtual or remote instruction on the attendance
22 rates of elementary and secondary school students during the 2019-
23 2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year, respectively; and

24 (4) the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and the
25 implementation of virtual or remote instruction disproportionately
26 impacted the attendance rates of specific subgroups of elementary
27 or secondary school students.

28 Additionally, the Secretary of Higher Education would be
29 required to conduct, or contract with a research institution to
30 conduct, a student to examine the impact of the COVID-19
31 pandemic on the enrollment of college and university students in
32 the State. The bill requires institutions of higher education to
33 provide any information that may be requested by the secretary or
34 research institution, to the extent practicable. At a minimum, the
35 study would analyze:

36 (1) the total enrollment of each institution of higher education
37 during the 2019-2020 academic year and the 2020-2021 academic
38 year, disaggregated by race, gender, age, residence, and academic
39 program;

40 (2) the undergraduate retention rate of each institution of higher
41 education during the period between the fall 2019 academic
42 semester and the fall 2020 academic semester, disaggregated by
43 race, gender, age, residence, and academic program;

44 (3) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the
45 implementation of virtual or remote instruction on the enrollment
46 rates of college and university students in the State during the 2019-
47 2020 academic year and the 2020-2021 academic year, respectively;
48 and

1 (4) the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and the
2 implementation of virtual or remote instruction disproportionately
3 impacted the rate of enrollment of certain student populations.

4 The bill requires an electronic copy of each study to be published
5 on the official Internet website of the Department of Education or
6 the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, as applicable,
7 within five days of the completion of the study. The bill also
8 requires the commissioner and secretary to submit a report to the
9 Governor and Legislature to summarize the findings of each study.