SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 3127

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 9, 2021

The Senate Higher Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3127 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill requires each public and independent institution of higher education, beginning with the 2021-2022, academic year to:

- ensure that all on-campus students have access to campus-based mental health care programs and services;
- provide assistance and referrals to mental health support services to any student unable to access on-campus services; and
- provide each newly-enrolled student with information concerning the location and availability of those programs and services.

The bill also requires, beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year, each public and independent institution of higher education to establish and maintain, on a 24-hour basis, a toll-free telephone hotline for students. The hotline will receive and respond to calls from students seeking counseling for depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder. The operators of the hotline will seek to identify those callers who should be referred to additional counseling services, and to provide such referrals.

The bill requires that the number for the hotline be posted in each dormitory, library, and student center, and any other facility or area on campus that the institution determines to be appropriate.

Under the bill, the operators of the hotline will be, to the greatest extent possible, persons who by experience or education are (1) familiar with the emotional and psychological tensions, depressions, and anxieties unique to higher education students; or (2) trained to provide counseling services involving substance abuse, personal stress management, and other emotional or psychological disorders or conditions which may be likely to adversely affect the well-being of students.

Finally, the bill provides that an institution of higher education may satisfy the hotline requirement established pursuant to the bill by providing each student with the hotline number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the NJ Hopeline, or any 24/7 mental

health hotline deemed appropriate by the Secretary of Higher Education. The bill also requires the institution to post the hotline numbers in each dormitory, library, and student center, and any other facility or area on campus that the institution determines to be appropriate.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 3007(2R), which was reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- limit the bill's requirement that students have access to campus-based mental health care programs and services to on-campus students;
- require each public and independent institution of higher education to provide assistance and referrals to mental health support services to any student unable to access on-campus services; and
- provide that, in lieu of establishing their own 24-hour hotline, an institution of higher education may satisfy the hotline requirement by providing each student with the hotline number for the National Suicide Prevention Hotline the NJ Hopeline, or other appropriate 24/7 mental health hotline. In addition to providing students with the hotline numbers, the institution must also post the hotline numbers in each dormitory, library, and student center, and any other facility or area on campus that the institution determines to be appropriate.