

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 3531

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 13, 2021

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 3531 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill provides that every school district, charter school, and renaissance school is required to develop and implement, or in the event that a school district, charter school, or renaissance school currently offers a summer school program expand access to, a summer school program, the purpose of which will be to mitigate the effects of learning loss experienced by students throughout the State as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, that will be offered during the summer following the 2020-2021 school year and 2021-2022 school year. The summer school program must be made available to students who will attend grades kindergarten through 12 in the school year immediately following the summer school program. The summer school program must provide high-quality learning experiences and instruction to mitigate the effects of learning loss with a focus on language, literacy, mathematics, and social and emotional readiness and will provide additional family support and resources, as applicable, to assist the students participating in the program. Under the bill, a summer school program may include a weekend program option in which students would attend courses of instruction on Saturdays and Sundays.

In order to be eligible to participate in a summer school program, the parent or guardian seeking to enroll a student in a summer school program is required to submit a written request for enrollment in the summer school program to the principal or chief administrator of the school in which the student is enrolled or, for a student who will attend kindergarten in the fall, to the principal or chief administrator of the school in which the student is registered to attend kindergarten in the September that immediately follows the summer school program. The written request must be submitted 45 days prior to the start of the summer school program. In the event that a parent or legal guardian registers a student to attend kindergarten less than 45 days prior to the start of the summer school program, the written request for summer school enrollment

shall be submitted at the time of registration for admittance into a kindergarten program.

Under the bill, a request for enrollment in a summer school program made on behalf of a student with disabilities who receives special education and related services would not be granted unless the request is approved in conjunction with the individualized education program team or 504 coordinator, as applicable, in accordance with all applicable federal and State law.

Under the bill, every school district, charter school, and renaissance school is required to submit a report to the Commissioner of Education by January 1 of each school year following the conclusion of the summer school program.

Under the bill, a school district, charter school, or renaissance school may enter into an agreement with another school district or an outside organization to provide a summer school program, provided that the school district, charter school, or renaissance school is unable to offer a summer school program in the district or at the charter school or renaissance school.

A school district, charter school, or renaissance school may request a waiver from the Department of Education (DOE) exempting the school district, charter school, or renaissance from the requirement to offer summer school programming under the provisions of the bill. A school district, charter school, or renaissance school must post any waiver granted by the DOE in a prominent location on the district's, charter school's, or renaissance school's Internet website. The DOE will develop and disseminate guidelines governing the summer school programming required under the bill.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

(1) clarify that the purpose of the bill will be to mitigate the effects of learning loss experienced by students throughout the State as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;

(2) provide that a school district, charter school, or renaissance school must submit a report to the Commissioner of Education by January 1 of each school year following the conclusion of a summer school program offered under the bill that includes details on the instructional strategies underpinning the summer school program, with specific regard to the ways in which the summer school program mitigates the effects of learning loss;

(3) provide that a school district, charter school, or renaissance school may enter into an agreement with another school district or outside organization to provide a summer school program, provided that the school district, charter school, or renaissance school is unable to offer a summer school program in the district or at the charter school or renaissance school;

(4) provide that a school district, charter school, or renaissance school may request a waiver from the DOE exempting the school district, charter school, or renaissance school from providing summer school programming pursuant to the provisions of the bill, and must post any such waiver in a prominent location on the district's, charter school's, or renaissance school's Internet website; and

(5) provides that the DOE shall develop and disseminate guidelines governing the summer school programming.