

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
SENATE, No. 3851
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

DATED: DECEMBER 14, 2021

SUMMARY

Synopsis: Creates School Bus Safety Ombudsman position in, but not of, Department of Education.

Type of Impact: Annual State expenditure increase.

Agencies Affected: Department of Education.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
State Expenditure Increase		Indeterminate	

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill will cause an indeterminate increase in annual State expenditures to the Department of Education (DOE) to provide for the salary and benefits costs of a School Bus Safety Ombudsman and for the establishment and continued operation of the Office of the School Bus Safety Ombudsman. Based on a review of existing public salary information for individuals who appear to be in similar positions as the one established in this bill, it is reasonable to assume that the annual salary costs for the School Bus Safety Ombudsman will be between \$120,000 and \$150,000, plus benefits.
- There may be an indeterminate level of additional costs associated with hiring staff to perform the duties of the office, although the OLS notes that existing staff within the DOE may be currently qualified to perform several of the functions prescribed in the bill.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill creates the Office of the School Bus Safety Ombudsman in, but not of, the DOE to monitor and administer all school bus safety and oversight activities. The Governor will appoint a School Bus Safety Ombudsman to perform the duties of the office.

The bill also requires the ombudsman to submit an annual report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission which includes a summary of the services provided, and enforcement actions taken, by the ombudsman during the school year, and

any specific recommendations the ombudsman deems appropriate and necessary concerning the oversight and management within the ombudsman’s purview.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS concludes that this bill will cause an indeterminate increase in annual State expenditures to the DOE to provide for the salary and benefits costs of a School Bus Safety Ombudsman and for the establishment and continued operation of the Office of the School Bus Safety Ombudsman. The bill stipulates that the office will be established in but not of the DOE. Based on a review of existing public salary information for individuals who appear to be in similar positions as the one established in this bill, it is reasonable to assume that the annual salary costs for the position of School Bus Safety Ombudsman will be between \$120,000 and \$150,000, plus benefits.

There may be an indeterminate level of costs associated with hiring staff to perform the duties of the office, although the OLS notes that existing staff within the DOE may be currently qualified to perform some of the functions prescribed in the bill that are already required of the Commissioner of Education or the DOE under current statutory law. However, the bill’s provisions prescribing new oversight powers to the office may necessitate the hiring of additional staff not already employed by the DOE. The potential number new staff needed to perform these oversight functions, and the salary and benefits costs associated with those new staff, is not known.

Lastly, the OLS finds that the bill will cause an indeterminate increase in State expenditures to provide for the establishment and ongoing maintenance and operation of a publicly accessible database that compiles certain violations and subsequent fines of school bus drivers.

<i>Section:</i>	<i>Education</i>
<i>Analyst:</i>	<i>Christopher Myles</i> <i>Associate Fiscal Analyst</i>
<i>Approved:</i>	<i>Thomas Koenig</i> <i>Legislative Budget and Finance Officer</i>

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).