

**SENATE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. 124**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 28, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator NELLIE POU

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Petitions federal government for emergency response funding to support safe reopening of schools following COVID-19 pandemic.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/14/2020)

1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION** respectfully petitioning the federal
2 government for emergency response funding to support the safe
3 reopening of schools following the COVID-19 pandemic.
4

5 **WHEREAS**, The provision of a thorough and efficient education to all
6 children, representing a constitutional obligation of this State as
7 well as a moral responsibility of this nation, depends upon a
8 commitment to invest in safe school environments in which
9 students can learn and grow; and

10 **WHEREAS**, Following the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic,
11 the Governor issued a series of executive orders to declare a public
12 health emergency and order the closure of all public, private, and
13 parochial schools in the State; and

14 **WHEREAS**, While the students and teachers of this State worked
15 tirelessly to complete the 2019-2020 school year through remote
16 instruction, the realities of virtual education have limited the
17 academic and social development of many students, especially
18 those who lack access to online instruction; and

19 **WHEREAS**, During this time, the United States Centers for Disease
20 Control and Prevention (CDC) issued recommendations concerning
21 the reopening of schools in a manner that protects the health and
22 safety of every student and school employee; and

23 **WHEREAS**, A recent cost analysis conducted by ASSA, The School
24 Superintendents Association and the Association of School
25 Business Officials International suggests that compliance with these
26 CDC recommendations could be cost-prohibitive for many school
27 districts, which are expected to incur additional expenses of at least
28 \$490 per student; and

29 **WHEREAS**, According to this analysis, the average school district is
30 expected to incur reopening expenses of nearly \$1.8 million,
31 including costs associated with adhering to health monitoring and
32 cleaning protocols, hiring additional staff to implement health and
33 safety protocols, providing personal protective equipment for staff
34 and students, and providing transportation and before and after
35 school programs in accordance with social distancing guidelines;
36 and

37 **WHEREAS**, In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the federal
38 government enacted the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic
39 Security Act” (CARES Act), which made approximately \$310
40 million available to local education agencies in this State through
41 the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
42 (ESSERF); and

43 **WHEREAS**, Although the CARES Act permits local education agencies
44 to use these monies to support various pandemic response and
45 reopening efforts, the current level of federal funding has failed to
46 ensure that every school district possesses the financial resources
47 necessary to safely reopen; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Absent an additional round of federal emergency response
2 funding that dedicates monies toward school reopening efforts,
3 many school districts could be forced to continue remote instruction
4 for the indefinite future or reopen without adequate health and
5 safety protections, thereby potentially causing students and staff to
6 suffer irreversible harm; now, therefore,

7
8 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Senate of the State of New Jersey (the
9 General Assembly concurring):

10
11 1. The Legislature of the State of New Jersey respectfully
12 petitions the Congress and President to enact legislation that
13 provides additional emergency response funding to support the
14 costs of safely reopening schools following the COVID-19
15 pandemic.

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17 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of the
18 State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or
19 the Secretary of the Senate to the President and Vice-President of
20 the United States, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United
21 States Senate, the Speaker and Minority Leader of the United States
22 House of Representatives, and each member of the United States
23 Congress elected from the State of New Jersey.

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STATEMENT

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28 This concurrent resolution respectfully petitions the federal
29 government to enact legislation that provides additional emergency
30 response funding to support the costs of safely reopening all schools
31 following the COVID-19 pandemic.

32 Following the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the
33 Governor issued a series of executive orders to declare a public
34 health emergency and order the closure of all public, private, and
35 parochial schools in the State. Since that time, the United States
36 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued
37 recommendations concerning the reopening of schools in a manner
38 that protects the health and safety of every student and school
39 employee.

40 However, a recent cost analysis conducted by ASSA, The School
41 Superintendents Association and the Association of School
42 Business Officials International suggests that compliance with these
43 CDC recommendations could be cost-prohibitive for many school
44 districts, which are expected to incur additional expenses of at least
45 \$490 per student.

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47 government enacted the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic
48 Security Act” (CARES Act), which made approximately \$310

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2 the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
3 (ESSERF). Although the CARES Act permits local education
4 agencies to use these monies to support various pandemic response
5 and reopening efforts, the current level of federal funding has failed
6 to ensure that every school district possesses the financial resources
7 necessary to safely reopen. Absent an additional round of federal
8 emergency response funding that dedicates monies toward school
9 reopening efforts, many school districts could be forced to continue
10 remote instruction for the indefinite future or reopen without
11 adequate health and safety protections, thereby potentially causing
12 students and staff to suffer irreversible harm.