

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 124

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

The Senate Education Committee reports favorably Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 124.

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

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

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

In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the federal government enacted the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” (CARES Act), which made approximately \$310 million available to local education agencies in this State through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF). Although the CARES Act permits local education agencies to use these monies to support various pandemic response and reopening efforts, the current level of federal funding has failed to ensure that every school district possesses the financial resources necessary to safely reopen.

Absent an additional round of federal emergency response funding that dedicates monies toward school reopening efforts, many school districts could be forced to continue remote instruction for the indefinite future or reopen without adequate health and safety protections, thereby potentially causing students and staff to suffer irreversible harm.

As reported by the committee, this concurrent resolution is identical to Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 190, which also was reported by the committee on this same date.