SENATE RESOLUTION No. 82

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED AUGUST 25, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator THOMAS H. KEAN, JR.
District 21 (Morris, Somerset and Union)
Senator VIN GOPAL
District 11 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:
Senator Pou

SYNOPSIS

Urges institutions of higher education to temporarily waive SAT or ACT testing requirements for admission due to COVID-19 pandemic.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/21/2020)

A SENATE RESOLUTION urging institutions of higher education to temporarily waive SAT and ACT testing requirements for college admission.

WHEREAS, Even under normal circumstances, applying to college is a stressful time for high school students. In addition to combining grades, recommendations, extracurricular activities, and personal essays into distinctive applications, high school students often experience high levels of anxiety preparing for and taking the SAT or ACT test, which are often required for admission to an institution of higher education; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 global pandemic has significantly and detrimentally impacted every facet of ordinary life. To limit the spread of COVID-19, it has become imperative for governments, institutions, schools, businesses, organizations, and people throughout New Jersey to implement strict social distancing measures and take other precautions to reduce the public health impact of the disease; and

WHEREAS, Following the 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 kindergarten through grade 12 public, private, and parochial schools in the State for the duration of the 2019-2020 school year; and

WHEREAS, Schools had to adapt their entire curriculum to provide online education and ensure that New Jersey students were able to meet the educational benchmarks necessary to advance to the next grade level or to graduate; and

WHEREAS, Although the students and teachers of this State worked tirelessly and did a laudable job to complete the 2019-2020 school year through remote instruction, the realities of virtual education limited the academic development of many students, especially those who lacked access to online instruction equipment; and

WHEREAS, Because of health concerns and the need for social distancing, many opportunities to take the SAT or ACT were cancelled. If a sufficient number of future test dates are not available, or if students are concerned about the adequacy of the safety precautions that will be implemented at the test sites, students should not be pressured to put themselves in a situation that the student feels could endanger his well-being; and

WHEREAS, In addition to health concerns, the global pandemic has also caused serious economic hardship for millions of Americans. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the national unemployment rate increased from 3.5 percent in February to 13.0 percent in May, and according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16.3 million Americans were unemployed as of July 2020; and

WHEREAS, Given the dire national economic circumstances, wealthier students whose families can afford expensive prep exams, courses,

and test coaches will have a distinct advantage taking the SAT or ACT test over the many students whose families are experiencing financial hardship; and

WHEREAS, On May 21, 2020, leaders of the University of California system voted to phase out the SAT and ACT as an admissions requirement over the next four years; and

WHEREAS, The College Board, which administers the SAT, stated that it supports colleges that are "rightfully emphasizing flexibility for the admissions process." Subsequently, many colleges and universities have decided to follow the lead taken by California's university system; and

WHEREAS, Due to the many concerns associated with the global pandemic, including: the health and well-being of students; the feasibility of taking a standardized admissions test while remaining socially distant; the limitations of virtual instruction; and the discrepancy between the ability of students from higher income families and students whose families are experiencing financial hardship, institutions of higher education should temporarily waive the SAT and ACT testing requirements for admission to the institution; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

1. This House urges institutions of higher education in New Jersey to temporarily waive the SAT and ACT testing requirements for admission to the institution due to the academic, social, and health-related difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the Secretary of Higher Education, and to the President and the governing board members of each institution of higher education in the State.

STATEMENT

This resolution urges institutions of higher education to temporarily waive the SAT or ACT testing requirement for admission to the institution due to the many academic, social, and health-related difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the 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 kindergarten through grade 12 public, private, and parochial schools in the State for the duration of the 2019-2020 school year. Schools had to adapt their entire curriculum to provide online education and ensure that New Jersey students were able to meet the educational benchmarks necessary to advance to the next grade level or to graduate.

Although the students and teachers of this State worked tirelessly and did a laudable job to complete the 2019-2020 school year through remote instruction, the realities of virtual education limited the academic development of many students, especially those who lacked access to online instruction equipment.

Because of health concerns and the need for social distancing, many opportunities to take the SAT or ACT were cancelled. If a sufficient number of future test dates are not available, or if students are concerned about the adequacy of the safety precautions that will be taken at the test sites, students should not be pressured to put themselves in a situation that the student feels could endanger his well-being.

In addition to health concerns, the global pandemic also caused serious economic hardship for millions of Americans. Given the dire national economic circumstances for many families, this leads to situations in which students from higher income families will have the opportunity to take advantage of expensive prep exams, courses, and test coaches and will have a distinct advantage taking the SAT or ACT test over students from families experiencing financial hardship. All of these factors lead to the conclusion that the SAT and ACT tests must not be used during this period for the purpose of college admission.