ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]
**ASSEMBLY, No. 1168**

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 8, 2023

The Assembly Community Development and Affairs Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1168 (1R).

As amended, this bill establishes a five-year Community Schools Pilot Program in the Department of Education. Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education would issue a request for proposals to identify a nonprofit organization or an institution of higher education located in the State to manage the pilot program. The selected organization or institution of higher education would be responsible for providing technical assistance to any school district, renaissance school, or charter school that is participating in the pilot program, and would be responsible for making group training sessions and information about community schools available to any district, renaissance school, or charter school that is interested in establishing a community school. Additionally, the organization or institution of higher education and the Department of Education would be responsible for selecting one school from each county in the State, including renaissance and charter schools, that would receive direct assistance from a site coordinator assigned to the school.

The organization or institution of higher education, in coordination with the Department of Education, would develop an application procedure and specific criteria for selecting schools to participate in the program and receive direct support from a site coordinator. The selection criteria would be posted on the department's website at least 20 days prior to the beginning of the application period. In selecting schools to receive a site coordinator, lower priority may be given to a public school of a school district, renaissance school, or charter school that is currently receiving federal funds to establish or operate a community school while higher priority may be given to a school located in a school district that does not have any schools in which a site coordinator has been assigned. The organization would employ and train individuals who would be assigned to serve as a site coordinator in a school selected to receive one. Those selected to be

site coordinators would be required to be employees of the organization or institution of higher education, and not the school district, renaissance school, or charter school to which they are assigned. The organization or institution of higher education may enter into an agreement with another nonprofit entity to assist it in providing technical assistance to participating schools, conducting training sessions, providing materials to interested schools, and selection of program participants, including the required establishment of a technical assistance center that will be available schools that are participating in the pilot program.

The commissioner would annually enter into a contract with an independent entity to perform an audit of the accounts and financial transactions of the organization or institution of higher education for the duration of the pilot program. The audits, which must be completed no later than five months following the State fiscal year, would be posted on the Department of Education's website. The bill also requires that the commissioner enter into a contract with an independent entity to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program. The final report, which the commissioner would forward to the Governor and the Legislature, would be due no later than six months prior to the conclusion of the pilot program.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments to the bill add further specificity to the operation of the pilot program, make changes to shorten certain timelines under the bill, and allow for an institution of higher education or a nonprofit organization to be selected to manage the pilot program. The amendments also establish a technical assistance center to be used by pilot program participants.