ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
ASSEMBLY, Nos. 4075 and 3229

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 23, 2022

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill Nos. 4075 and 3229 (1R), with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill requires the board of education of each school district and the board of trustees of a charter school or renaissance school project to develop and adopt a policy for the establishment of a threat assessment team at each school. The purpose of a threat assessment team is to provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students of concern, assessing those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk, to prevent targeted violence in the school, and ensure a safe and secure school environment that enhances the learning experience for all members of the school community.

A threat assessment team would be required to include, to the extent possible: a school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker, or other school employee with expertise in student counseling; a teaching staff member; a school principal or other senior school administrator; a safe schools resource officer or school employee who serves as a school liaison to law enforcement; and the school safety specialist. Additional school employees may serve as regular members of the threat assessment team or may be consulted during the threat assessment process, as determined to be appropriate by the team. Nothing in the bill would affect the provisions of any collective bargaining agreement or individual contract of employment in effect on this act's effective date.

Under the bill, any policy developed by a school district or charter school or renaissance school project is required to include:

- guidance for students, teachers, and all school staff regarding the recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior in a student that may represent a threat to the school community;

- the designation of members of the school community to whom threatening behavior is to be reported;
- the development and implementation of policies concerning the assessment and intervention of students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of the school community, and appropriate actions to be taken, including available social, developmental, and law enforcement resources, for students whose behavior is identified as posing a threat to the safety of the school community;
- coordination and consultation with the designated school safety specialist; and
- a policy that the threat assessment team will not disclose or disseminate any information obtained during their assessment beyond the purpose for which the information was provided to the threat assessment team, except that the threat assessment team is authorized to disclose the information to applicable agencies to pursue appropriate action for any student whose behavior is identified as posing a threat to the safety of the school community.

The bill requires the threat assessment team, when assessing a student whose behavior may pose a threat to the school community, in the case of a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan, to consult with the student's IEP team or 504 team to determine whether the aberrant behavior is a threat to school safety. The bill also requires the threat assessment team members to undergo training consistent with guidelines developed by the department, but which would include training on adverse childhood experiences, childhood trauma, cultural competency, and implicit bias.

The Department of Education, in consultation with State law enforcement agencies and the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, would be required to develop guidelines for school districts, charter schools, and renaissance school projects regarding the establishment and training of threat assessment teams. The Department of Education would provide training through the New Jersey School Safety Specialist Academy established under current law. The school safety specialist would provide training to school staff consistent with the training and guidelines provided by the department.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- clarify that the purpose of the threat assessment team is to provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students of concern, assessing those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk, to prevent targeted violence in the school, and ensure a safe and

secure school environment that enhances the learning experience for all members of the school community;

- require that training provided to members of the threat assessment team be provided by the school safety specialist and be consistent with guidelines provided by the Department of Education;
- provide that training will ensure that threat assessment teams will not have a disparate impact on students based on their homelessness status in addition to other qualities; and
- require the Department of Education to provide training for members of the threat assessment team through the New Jersey School Safety Specialist Academy.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill has not been certified as requiring a fiscal note.