

ASSEMBLY, No. 5376

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 8, 2023

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman VICTORIA A. FLYNN

District 13 (Monmouth)

Assemblyman GERRY SCHARFENBERGER

District 13 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblymen Thomson, Umba and Assemblywoman Sawyer

SYNOPSIS

“Pandemic Education Relief Act”; provides additional State school aid for certain school districts that have previously experienced reductions and establishes allowable uses of aid.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/18/2023)

1 AN ACT concerning State school aid for certain school districts.

2

3 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
4 of New Jersey:

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6 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Pandemic
7 Education Relief Act.”

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9 2. a. In addition to the amount of State school aid provided to a
10 school district pursuant to P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.) in
11 the 2023-2024 school year, a school district that experienced a
12 reduction in State school aid in any of the school years 2019-2020
13 through 2023-2024 pursuant to section 4 of P.L.2018, c.67
14 (C.18A:7F-68) shall receive an amount of State school aid that is
15 equal to the total amount of reductions experienced by the district.

16 b. A school district that receives State school aid pursuant to
17 subsection a. of this section shall only use the funds for academic
18 purposes and to address learning loss resulting from the COVID-19
19 pandemic. Allowable uses of funds allocated to a school district
20 pursuant to this section shall include, but not be limited to:

21 (1) implementing or improving evidenced-based learning
22 interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment;
23 comprehensive before-school or after-school programs; tutoring or
24 extra help programs; and increasing the length of the school day or
25 school year;

26 (2) implementing strategies, programs, and interventions that
27 respond to students’ social and emotional needs;

28 (3) providing mental health services and supports to students;

29 (4) hiring additional instructional staff for the purpose of
30 increasing student learning opportunities;

31 (5) increasing salaries of current staff who are assuming new
32 educational responsibilities as a result of the implementation of new
33 academic programs or interventions; and

34 (6) purchasing supplemental educational materials and
35 technology.

36 c. A school district that receives State school aid pursuant to this
37 section shall not use the funds for:

38 (1) school facilities projects or capital maintenance projects, as
39 those terms are defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72
40 (C.18A:7G-3), or to finance the costs of any other maintenance,
41 repairs, or improvements to school facilities; and

42 (2) increasing the salaries of current school staff, except as
43 otherwise authorized pursuant to paragraph (5) of subsection b. of
44 this section.

45 d. (1) A school district that receives State school aid pursuant to
46 this section shall, at intervals to be determined by the
47 Commissioner of Education, report to the commissioner the specific
48 ways in which the district used funds allocated to it pursuant to this

1 section during the applicable reporting period. No later than 30 days
2 following the enactment of this act, the commissioner shall notify
3 school districts of the manner and form in which the districts are to
4 report the uses of funds allocated pursuant to this section.

5 (2) In the event that a school district, after reporting its uses of
6 funds to the commissioner, is determined to have expended funds
7 for purposes that are not consistent with the allowable uses
8 enumerated pursuant subsection b. of this section, the commissioner
9 may withhold State aid to the district in an amount equal to that
10 which was expended for a non-allowable use.

11 (3) No later than 60 days after the conclusion of the 2023-2024
12 school year, the commissioner shall prepare and submit to the
13 Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991,
14 c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), a report concerning school districts' uses of
15 funds allocated pursuant to this section.

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17 3. This act shall take effect immediately.
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20 STATEMENT

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22 This bill, which is to be known as the "Pandemic Education
23 Relief Act," provides that, in the 2023-2024 school year, a school
24 district that experienced a reduction in State school aid in any of the
25 school years 2019-2020 through 2023-2024 would receive an
26 amount of State school aid equal to the total amount of reductions
27 experienced by the district. The bill requires a school district
28 receiving aid under the bill to only use the funds for academic
29 purposes and to address learning loss resulting from the COVID-19
30 pandemic. The bill stipulates that the aid may not be spent on
31 school facilities projects or other maintenance, repairs, or
32 improvements to school facilities. School districts would also be
33 prohibited from using the funds for increasing the salaries of current
34 school staff, unless the funds are used to increase salaries for staff
35 who are assuming new educational responsibilities.

36 The bill also requires school districts to report to the
37 Commissioner of Education how they use the aid received under the
38 bill. In the event that a school district uses the funds for a non-
39 allowable purpose, the commissioner is authorized to withhold State
40 aid to the district in an amount equal to that which was expended
41 for the non-allowable purpose.