

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 50

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 20, 2022

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 50 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill amends the provisions of current law concerning the graduation proficiency test to provide for the development or designation of a Statewide assessment or assessments in reading, writing, and computational skills. The bill also eliminates the requirement that the assessment be administered specifically in the 11th grade.

Under current law, P.L.1979, c.241 (C.18A:7C-1 et seq.), the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education are required to establish a program of standards for graduation from high school, including the development of a Statewide assessment test in reading, writing, and computational skills. The State graduation proficiency test is required to be administered to all 11th grade students, and to any 11th or 12th grade student who has not yet demonstrated proficiency on the test.

Under the bill, the State will be required to administer an assessment or assessments designed to test high school proficiency, and any student who initially does not demonstrate proficiency on the assessment or assessments is required to be given an opportunity to retest.

The bill contains a grandfather provision for students in the graduating classes of 2024 and 2025, providing that these students will be deemed to have met graduation assessment requirements if they satisfy the State Board of Education regulations, pursuant to N.J.A.C.6A:8-5.1, that were in place as of October 4, 2021 concerning graduation assessment requirements for the classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025. Concerning the class of 2023, the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment administered as the State graduation proficiency test in March 2022 to 11th grade students, expected to graduate as part of the class of 2023, would be considered a field test. Under no circumstances would the results of the field test, a substitute competency test, or any other demonstration of proficiency through techniques and instruments other than a standardized test pursuant to current law be used as a prerequisite for graduation for students in the graduating class of 2023.

The bill provides that, for the classes of 2026 and thereafter, the graduation proficiency assessment or assessments would be developed or designated by the Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education. The process for the development or designation by the commissioner of the graduation proficiency assessment or assessments would begin no later than 60 days following the date of enactment of the bill. The intent of this provision is to ensure that the development or designation of a graduation proficiency assessment for these graduating classes is started expeditiously. The 60-day timeline for the beginning of this process is also intended to provide for sufficient time for any field testing as appropriate and for the receipt of input and feedback from the education community prior to the administration of an assessment or assessments to all students. Under the bill, in the event that the Commissioner of Education develops or designates a new Statewide assessment or assessments, the commissioner is required to engage in a collaborative process with interested stakeholders in the education community to solicit feedback.

The bill also amends current law to provide that a student who a district determines to be at risk of not meeting State and district assessment standards for graduation but who has met all credit, curriculum, and attendance requirements, is required to take the graduation proficiency assessment or assessments in order to be eligible for a comprehensive assessment of proficiencies utilizing techniques other than standardized tests as provided in current law.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to require that the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment administered as the State graduation proficiency test in March 2022 to 11th grade students, expected to graduate as part of the class of 2023, would be considered a field test. The amendments provide that under no circumstances would the results of the field test, a substitute competency test, or any other demonstration of proficiency through techniques and instruments other than a standardized test pursuant to current law be used as a prerequisite for graduation for students in the graduating class of 2023.