ASSEMBLY, No. 5385

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

Sponsored by:
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District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)
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SYNOPSIS

Establishes two-generational school readiness and workforce development pilot program for certain low-income households.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning school readiness and workforce development and supplementing chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

1. There is established in the Department of Education a five-year two-generational school readiness and workforce development pilot program. The purpose of the pilot program is to foster family economic self-sufficiency in low-income households by delivering academic and job readiness support services across two generations in the same household. Households may include, but need not be limited to, mothers, fathers, noncustodial parents, and other primary caregivers. The pilot program shall be located in municipalities designated by the Commissioner of Education which have a poverty rate that is at least twice the Statewide average poverty rate. The pilot sites shall work together as a learning community, informed by members of low-income households within the pilot sites, peer-to-peer exchanges, and technical assistance in best practices.

2. The two-generational school readiness and workforce development pilot program shall serve as a blueprint for a Statewide, two-generational school readiness and workforce development model. The pilot program may include opportunities for Statewide learning, in addition to the pilot sites, in two-generational system building and policy development. The pilot program shall be funded by the State and any available private moneys. The annual amount of State funds appropriated to the pilot program shall not exceed $1,500,000. The pilot program shall include:

a. early learning programs, adult education, child care, housing, job training, transportation, financial literacy, and other related support services including, but not limited to, health and mental health services, offered at one location, wherever possible;

b. development of a long-term plan to adopt a two-generational model for the delivery of the services described in subsection a. of this section on a Statewide basis. The plan shall include, but need not be limited to, the targeted use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, to the extent permissible under federal law, to support two-generational programming, and State grant incentives for private entities that develop two-generational programming;

c. partnerships between State and national philanthropic organizations, as available, to provide the pilot sites and the interagency working group established pursuant to section 3 of this act, with technical assistance in the phase-in and design of model

two-generational programs and practices, an evaluation plan, and a Statewide replication and implementation of the program; and

d. a workforce liaison to gauge the needs of employers and households in each community and help coordinate the two-generational program to meet the needs of such employers and households.

3. The pilot program shall be overseen by an interagency working group that shall include, but need not be limited to, the Commissioners of the Departments of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, Human Services, Children and Families, Community Affairs, Transportation, and Health, or their designees; the Secretary of Higher Education, or the secretary's designee; one member of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee appointed by the President of the Senate; one member of the Assembly Appropriations Committee appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly; one public member representing a business or trade organization appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate; one public member with expertise on issues concerning children and families appointed by the Majority Leader of the General Assembly; one member of the Senate Transportation Committee appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate; one member of the Assembly Education Committee appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly; not more than a total of six persons from low-income households selected by the agency coordinating services at each pilot site; representatives of nonprofit and philanthropic organizations and scholars who are experts in two-generational programs and policies; and other business and academic professionals as needed to achieve goals for two-generational systems planning, evaluations, and outcomes.

4. The coordinators of the two-generational programs in each community in the pilot program and any organization serving as a fiduciary for the program shall report on a quarterly basis to the interagency working group information deemed necessary by the working group.

5. The interagency working group shall submit a report four years following the effective date of this act to the Governor, and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), that includes information on:

a. the parent-informed strategies selected for success;

b. the challenges and opportunities in working with a parent and child concurrently to promote school and workforce success;

c. the changes in policy, program, budget, or communication on the local and State levels necessary to achieve the goals of the program;

d. child, parent, and family outcomes in the area of school readiness and school success, as determined by the interagency working group in consultation with State and national evaluators;

e. workforce readiness, work success, and family support outcomes, as determined by the interagency working group in consultation with State and national evaluators;

f. the cost of the program in both State and private funds; and

g. recommendations to expand the program to additional communities.

6. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes in the Department of Education a five-year two-generational school readiness and workforce development pilot program. The purpose of the program is to foster family economic self-sufficiency in low-income households by delivering academic and job readiness support services across two generations in the same household. The Commissioner of Education will designate the municipalities that participate in the pilot program which must be municipalities that have a poverty rate that is at least twice the Statewide average poverty rate.

Under the bill, the pilot program will include services such as: early learning programs; adult education; child care; housing; job training; transportation; financial literacy; and other related support services such as health and mental health services.

The program will include a long-term plan to adopt a model for the delivery of these services on a Statewide basis. The pilot program will foster partnerships between State and national philanthropic organizations to provide technical assistance in the phase-in and design of the two-generational programs and practices model, an evaluation plan, and a Statewide replication and implementation of the program. The pilot program will include a workforce liaison to gauge the needs of employers and households in each community and help coordinate the two-generational program to meet the needs of these employers and households.

The bill establishes an interagency working group to oversee the pilot program that will include:

- the Commissioners of the Departments of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, Human Services, Children and Families, Community Affairs, Transportation, and Health and the Secretary of Higher Education, or their designees;
- four members of the New Jersey State Legislature;
- one public member representing a business or trade organization, appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate;

- one public member with expertise on issues concerning children and families, appointed by the Majority Leader of the General Assembly;
- not more than a total of six persons from low-income households from the pilot sites;
- representatives of nonprofit and philanthropic organizations and scholars; and
- other business and academic professionals as needed to achieve goals for two-generational systems planning, evaluations, and outcomes.

The coordinators of the program sites and any organization serving as fiduciary for the program will report on a quarterly basis to the working group on such information as the working group deems necessary. The working group will submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature that includes information on program outcomes and a recommendation on program expansion.