

ASSEMBLY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5597

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 22, 2026

The Assembly Higher Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5597.

This bill concerns the campus climate survey conducted by institutions of higher education.

Current law requires each institution of higher education to conduct a campus climate survey every four years. Each institution has met this requirement using a different survey instrument. Consequently, the ability to compare data across institutions is limited. This bill requires each institution to administer a uniform campus climate survey.

The bill requires each institution of higher education to conduct a uniform campus climate survey developed by the Secretary of Higher Education. The uniform campus climate survey instrument will: (1) focus on collecting data that will better facilitate the efforts of institutions of higher education to address, prevent, and respond to campus sexual assault and misconduct; (2) collect data on respondents' direct and indirect experiences with nonconsensual sexual contact, threats of sexual violence, and sexual assaults occurring on the campus of the institution of higher education; (3) measure each institution's response to sexual assault and misconduct; (4) collect data on student attitudes towards sexual assault and misconduct; (5) collect data on bystander attitudes and behavior in relation to sexual assault and misconduct; (6) evaluate the experiences of sexual assault victims enrolled in the institution as it relates to meeting their physical health, mental health, and academic needs; and (7) evaluate student awareness and access to institution and community resources for victims of sexual assault and misconduct.

In addition to conducting the campus climate survey using the instrument developed by the secretary, an institution may tailor additional questions to meet the needs of the institution or address institutional-specific concerns. The responses to those questions will not be submitted to the Campus Sexual Assault Commission or the Secretary of Higher Education. The commission is required to annually conduct a comparative analysis using the information submitted to the commission. The comparative analysis will identify Statewide or sector-specific needs and track institutional and Statewide progress over time.

Under the bill, an institution of higher education will publish the results of its most recent uniform campus climate survey on the Internet website of the institution in a manner that protects student privacy and prevents the sharing of personally-identifiable information.

This bill directs the Legislature to provide funding to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and the Campus Sexual Assault Commission in such amounts and with such frequency as may be necessary for the development and administration of the uniform campus climate survey. The bill requires the Secretary of Higher Education to use a portion of the funds to develop: (1) a uniform campus climate survey instrument; and (2) such technical assistance documents and trainings as may be necessary to ensure the successful administration and analysis of the survey at each institution of higher education. The bill requires the commission to use a portion of the funds to conduct the comparative analysis required under the bill. Finally, the bill directs the secretary to distribute the remaining funds to institutions of higher education for the administration and analysis of the survey.