ASSEMBLY, No. 4856

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 23, 2024

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman HERB CONAWAY, JR.
District 7 (Burlington)
Assemblywoman ALIXON COLLAZOS-GILL
District 27 (Essex and Passaic)
Assemblywoman CARMEN THERESA MORALES
District 34 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes pilot program in DOE to use lockable cell phone pouches in certain public schools; appropriates $500,000.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/23/2024)

AN ACT establishing a pilot program in DOE concerning lockable cell phone pouches and making an appropriation.

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

1. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a one-year pilot program to assess the academic and mental health benefits associated with the use of lockable cell phone pouches in grades six through 12.

b. A school district that wishes to participate in the pilot program shall submit an application to the commissioner. The application shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) the number of middle schools and high schools in the district;

(2) the number of students enrolled in each middle school and high school in the district; and

(3) a proposal outlining the district's program implementation plan, including the number of schools in which the district will use the lockable cell phone pouches and the method by which the district will notify the parent or guardian of a student in the event of an emergency.

c. The commissioner shall select two districts in each of the northern, central, and southern regions of the State to participate in the pilot program and shall seek a cross section of school districts from urban, suburban, and rural areas of the State. The commissioner may select a school district that is currently implementing a program that utilizes lockable cell phone pouches in schools of the district to participate in the pilot program established pursuant to this act, provided the district is not receiving any other grant to support use of lockable cell phone pouches in schools.

d. The commissioner shall provide pilot districts with guidance regarding the use of lockable cell phone pouches in schools, including training on how the lockable cell phone pouches work.

e. No later than 120 days following the conclusion of the pilot program, the commissioner shall submit a report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature that evaluates the effectiveness of the pilot program in improving academic success and mental health outcomes of students in middle school and high school and provides recommendations as to continued use of lockable cell phone pouches in schools.

2. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Education $500,000 to effectuate the provisions of this act.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes a one-year pilot program in DOE to assess the academic and mental health benefits associated with the use of lockable cell phone pouches in grades six through 12.

Under the bill, a school district that wishes to participate in the pilot program is required to submit an application to the commissioner that is to include: (1) the number of middle schools and high schools in the district; (2) the number of students enrolled in each middle school and high school in the district; and (3) a proposal outlining the district's program implementation plan, including the number of schools in which the district will use the lockable cell phone pouches and the method by which the district will notify the parent or guardian of a student in the event of an emergency.

The bill directs the Commissioner of Education to select two districts in each of the northern, central, and southern regions of the State to participate in the pilot program and to seek a cross section of school districts from urban, suburban, and rural areas of the State. The bill permits the commissioner to select a school district that is currently implementing a program that utilizes lockable cell phone pouches in schools of the district to participate in the pilot program, provided the district is not receiving any other grant to support the use of lockable cell phone pouches in schools.

Under the bill, the commissioner is to provide pilot districts with guidance regarding the use of lockable cell phone pouches in schools, including training on how the lockable cell phone pouches work. The bill directs the commissioner to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature no later than 120 days following the conclusion of the pilot program that evaluates the effectiveness of the pilot program in improving academic success and mental health outcomes of students in middle school and high school and provides recommendations as to continued use of lockable cell phone pouches in schools

Finally, the bill appropriates $500,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Education to effectuate the provisions of the bill.