

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1657

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1657 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill would permit a student assistance coordinator, school counselor, or school psychologist or other mental health professional working in a school district to refer, or help facilitate the referral of, a student to an individual or practice licensed to provide professional counseling, for mental health assessments and services. A student assistance coordinator, school counselor, or school psychologist or other mental health professional working in a school district is prohibited from referring a student to an individual or practice licensed to provide professional counseling with whom the district employee, or the employee's immediate family, or the employee in combination with his or her family has a significant beneficial interest.

In the case of a student who is not legally permitted to consent to the assessments and services, the student's parent or guardian is to be notified of the referral or the facilitation of the referral, and the parent or guardian is required to consent prior to the provision of any assessment or service by the licensed private individual or practice.

In the case of a referral or the facilitation of a referral of a student to an individual or practice licensed to provide professional counseling, the bill provides that neither the school district nor the individual making the referral or facilitating the referral will be required to bear the cost of the assessments and services provided to the student.

As amended, this bill would not limit a school district's authority to provide mental health assessments and services to students prior to or after a referral or the facilitation of a referral has been made to an individual or practice licensed to provide professional counseling.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to clarify that referrals under the bill can be made to licensed individuals or practices; as introduced, the bill limited referrals to private individuals.