

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2195

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2195 with committee amendments.

This bill establishes the four-year “New Jersey Innovation Inspiration School Grant Pilot Program” in the Department of Education. The pilot program will award grants to school districts to support non-traditional STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) teaching methods for students in grades 4 through 12, support the participation of students in nonprofit STEM competitions, foster innovation and broaden interest in careers in STEM fields, and encourage collaboration among students, engineers, and professional mentors.

Under the bill, a school district may submit to the commissioner an application that includes a description of how the school district will establish STEM teaching programs that use a non-traditional STEM teaching method, identify and recruit partners and mentors to help implement these programs, and support teachers and participants. The application also will contain information on how the district will assess the impact of the STEM teaching programs on participating students.

Under the pilot program the commissioner will award a total of six one-time, up-front grants of up to \$150,000 each. Two grants will be awarded to districts located in the northern region of the State, two to districts in the central region, and two to districts in the southern region. In awarding the grants, the commissioner will give priority to applications from districts that intend to target activities in a rural or urban school, a low-performing school, or a school or school district that serves low-income students. The districts will be permitted to use the grant funds for a period of up to four years.

A school district that receives a grant is to use the funds to: promote STEM education and career activities; purchase supplies needed for participation in non-traditional STEM teaching programs; finance the expenses of student participation in regional and national nonprofit STEM competitions; and provide incentives and stipends for teachers involved in non-traditional STEM teaching methods outside of their regular teaching duties.

The bill establishes the “Innovation Inspiration School Grant Fund” within the Department of Education to provide grants to school

districts under the pilot program. A school district that receives a grant will provide district matching funds in an amount equal to 25% of the grant amount. In addition, the district must secure matching funds or in-kind contributions from corporate donors or other private sector donors in an amount equal to 25% of the grant amount.

Under the bill, State funds will not be used to support grants under the pilot program unless there is an appropriation for the pilot program in the annual appropriations act.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to specify that it will first take effect in the first full school year following enactment, rather than in the 2016-2017 school year.