ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 171

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 4, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman MILA M. JASEY
District 27 (Essex and Morris)
Assemblywoman PAMELA R. LAMPITT
District 6 (Burlington and Camden)
Assemblyman ROBERT J. KARABINCHAK
District 18 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle

SYNOPSIS

Petitions federal government for emergency response funding to help schools expand access to online instruction for economically disadvantaged students.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/7/2020)
ACR171 JASEY, LAMPITT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION respectfully petitioning the federal government for emergency response funding to help schools expand access to online instruction among economically disadvantaged students.

WHEREAS, The provision of a thorough and efficient education to all children in New Jersey, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, not only fulfills a constitutional obligation of this State, but also serves as an investment in the long-term prosperity of this country; and

WHEREAS, Following the recent outbreak of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, the Governor issued a series of executive orders to declare a public health emergency and order the closure of all public, private, and parochial schools in the State; and

WHEREAS, According to guidance issued by the Department of Education (DOE), school districts impacted by the closure may provide home instruction services, including online instruction, to all enrolled students during this time; and

WHEREAS, While the DOE requires school districts to provide all students with equitable access to home instruction services, the reliance on online instruction has limited the ability of certain students, whose homes lack internet access, to receive the same level of educational services as their classmates; and

WHEREAS, Despite the best efforts of the teachers of this State, educational disparities resulting from the lack of internet access threaten to widen the educational achievement gap that exists between affluent and lower-income households; and

WHEREAS, In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the federal government enacted the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” (CARES Act), which made approximately $13.5 billion available to local education agencies through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF); and

WHEREAS, Although the CARES Act permits local education agencies to use monies received from the ESSERF to purchase educational technologies that support online instruction, this authorization fails to ensure that all students who lack internet access can participate in online instruction; and

WHEREAS, Absent an additional round of federal emergency response funding that dedicates monies to expanding access to online instruction for economically disadvantaged students, these students will continue to fall further behind their classmates, thereby prolonging the educational disparities that result from the outbreak of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, As a model for this funding, the “Emergency Educational Connections Act of 2020,” pending before Congress as H.R.6563, would appropriate $2 billion to the federal E-Rate Program for schools and libraries to purchase Wi-fi hotspots, connected devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, etc.), and other equipment necessary for
students and staff members to access online instruction during the public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, Emergency response funding of this nature promises to reduce the unnecessary educational disparities that result from public health-related school closures; and

WHEREAS, Accordingly, the Legislature respectfully petitions the federal government to enact legislation, such as “Emergency Educational Connections Act of 2020,” to provide such funding as is necessary to ensure that all students have equitable access to online instruction in the event of a public health-related school closure; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey (the Senate concurring):

1. The Legislature of the State of New Jersey respectfully petitions the Congress and President to enact legislation, such as the “Emergency Educational Connections Act of 2020,” that provides additional emergency response funding to help schools expand access to online instruction among economically disadvantaged students in the event of a public health-related school closure.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of the State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the Secretary of the Senate to the President and Vice-President of the United States, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate, the Speaker and Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, and each member of the United States Congress elected from the State of New Jersey.

STATEMENT

This concurrent resolution respectfully petitions the federal government to provide additional emergency response funding to help schools expand access to online instruction during public health-related school closures.

Following the recent outbreak of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, the Governor issued a series of executive orders to declare a public health emergency and order the closure of all public, private, and parochial schools in the State. According to guidance issued by the Department of Education (DOE), school districts impacted by the closure may provide home instruction services, including online instruction, to all enrolled students during this time. While the DOE requires school districts to provide all students with equitable access to home instruction services, the reliance on online instruction has limited the ability of certain students, whose homes lack internet access, to receive the same level of educational
services as their classmates. Despite the best efforts of the teachers
of this State, educational disparities resulting from the lack of
internet access threaten to widen the educational achievement gap
that exists between affluent and lower-income households.

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online instruction.

Absent an additional round of federal emergency response
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connected devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, etc.), and other equipment
necessary for students and staff members to access online
instruction during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Emergency response funding of this nature promises to reduce
the unnecessary educational disparities that result from public
health-related school closures. Accordingly, the Legislature
respectfully petitions the federal government to take such action as
is necessary to ensure that all students have equitable access to
online instruction in the event of a public health-related school
closure.