



S-3531- Requires public schools to offer or expand summer school programs to students.

The New Jersey School Board Association (NJSBA), a federation of the state's public school districts, respectfully opposes S-3531.

While the NJSBA certainly supports initiatives aimed at advancing student achievement, decisions on whether to offer summer school and to whom it should be offered are best made at the local level. Every local school board, working in conjunction with their superintendent, are in the best position to determine what resources that district can allocate for summer school; and for whom those valuable resources should be best allocated.

Boards of education, in consultation with district staff, also have a responsibility to determine whether their particular students would be better served by investing resources in other student enrichment programs. This bill, unfortunately, would usurp that responsibility by mandating one specific approach that could interfere with their ability to implement other educational programs to meet students' academic or social and emotional needs.

Moreover, NJSBA is concerned with the timing of this bill. School districts are finalizing their summer school plans now, if they have not already been finalized. Any new requirements for the summer 2021 at this late stage would be disruptive and potentially counterproductive. Furthermore, due to staffing shortages, districts will likely encounter substantial difficulty implementing a summer school program that would have to be made available to any student requesting participation, particularly with such a short implementation timeframe.

Further, S-3531 imposes summer school requirements for the summer of 2022 as well. As part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) recently signed by the President, New Jersey is to receive \$27.6 million for summer school programming. However, it is NJSBA's understanding this money has not been drawn down by the state yet and that the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is looking to use these funds for the summer of 2022. It would therefore be prudent to hold off on enacting S-3531 until the NJDOE's plans for ARP summer school funds are finalized.

Instead of proceeding with this proposed mandate, the NJSBA respectfully requests that districts be provided with the resources and flexibility to invest in programs that will meet their students' and local priorities. Thank for your consideration of the NJSBA's position on this bill.