



<b>COMMITTEE STATEMENT:</b>	<b>ASSEMBLY:</b>	No	
	<b>SENATE:</b>	Yes	Education Budget & Appropriations

(Audio archived recordings of the committee meetings, corresponding to the date of the committee statement, **may possibly** be found at [www.njleg.state.nj.us](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us))

<b>FLOOR AMENDMENT STATEMENT:</b>	No
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<b>LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE:</b>	Yes	06/28/2024
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<b>VETO MESSAGE:</b>	No
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<b>GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING:</b>	Yes
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**FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:**

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<b>REPORTS:</b>	No
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<b>HEARINGS:</b>	No
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<b>NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:</b>	No
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CL/MM

P.L. 2024, CHAPTER 53, *approved August 13, 2024*  
Assembly Committee Substitute for  
Assembly, No. 2288

1 AN ACT establishing the Office of Learning Equity and Academic  
2 Recovery and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey  
3 Statutes.

4  
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
6 of New Jersey:

7  
8 1. a. There is established in the Department of Education the  
9 Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. It shall be the  
10 purpose of the office to promote student literacy and advance  
11 learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for  
12 the office shall be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and  
13 the leadership of the office shall directly advise the commissioner  
14 on these matters.

15 b. The office shall establish guidelines as necessary to effectuate  
16 the duties established pursuant to this section. The duties of the  
17 office shall include, but not be limited to:

18 (1) improving the capacity of the department to make data-driven  
19 decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies by  
20 identifying, compiling, and analyzing data collected by the  
21 department and other reputable data sources that could improve the  
22 department's understanding of the factors that impact reading,  
23 English-Language Arts, and other performance metrics of students;

24 (2) coordinating resources within the department to promote the  
25 implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration  
26 policies. These efforts may include recommending strategies for  
27 improving cohesion across all current and future literacy initiatives  
28 and providing expertise in analyzing current and future policy  
29 initiatives to ensure considerations for improving student literacy  
30 and closing academic achievement gaps experienced by students of  
31 color, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

32 (3) conducting research on State and national best practices in  
33 the areas of literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration, and  
34 providing subject matter expertise that informs future policy  
35 decisions in these areas;

36 (4) supporting school districts in developing and implementing  
37 best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional  
38 materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery

1 through research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other  
2 appropriate methods;

3 (5) supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and  
4 leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and  
5 other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity; and

6 (6) any other duties as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

7 c. The office shall be funded by any combination of State or  
8 federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal  
9 funds.

10 d. Two years following the establishment of the office, the  
11 commissioner shall conduct a review of office operations. The  
12 review shall evaluate the success of the office in carrying out its  
13 duties established pursuant to this section, and shall include  
14 recommendations for improving the organization and administration  
15 of the office to enhance the department's capacity to promote  
16 student literacy and learning equity.

17  
18 2. The Commissioner of Education shall promulgate rules  
19 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410  
20 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) as necessary to effectuate the provisions of this  
21 section.

22

23 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

24

25

26

27

28 Establishes Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery  
29 in DOE.

## CHAPTER 53

AN ACT establishing the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

C.18A:4-1.6 "Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery" established; duties.

1. a. There is established in the Department of Education the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. It shall be the purpose of the office to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for the office shall be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and the leadership of the office shall directly advise the commissioner on these matters.

b. The office shall establish guidelines as necessary to effectuate the duties established pursuant to this section. The duties of the office shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) improving the capacity of the department to make data-driven decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies by identifying, compiling, and analyzing data collected by the department and other reputable data sources that could improve the department's understanding of the factors that impact reading, English-Language Arts, and other performance metrics of students;

(2) coordinating resources within the department to promote the implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration policies. These efforts may include recommending strategies for improving cohesion across all current and future literacy initiatives and providing expertise in analyzing current and future policy initiatives to ensure considerations for improving student literacy and closing academic achievement gaps experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

(3) conducting research on State and national best practices in the areas of literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration and providing subject matter expertise that informs future policy decisions in these areas;

(4) supporting school districts in developing and implementing best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery through research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other appropriate methods;

(5) supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity; and

(6) any other duties as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

c. The office shall be funded by any combination of State or federal funds in accordance with the requirements of any federal funds.

d. Two years following the establishment of the office, the commissioner shall conduct a review of office operations. The review shall evaluate the success of the office in carrying out its duties established pursuant to this section and shall include recommendations for improving the organization and administration of the office to enhance the department's capacity to promote student literacy and learning equity.

2. The Commissioner of Education shall promulgate rules pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) as necessary to effectuate the provisions of this section.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved August 13, 2024.

# ASSEMBLY, No. 2288

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 221st LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblywoman YVONNE LOPEZ**

**District 19 (Middlesex)**

**Assemblyman BENJIE E. WIMBERLY**

**District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)**

**Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY**

**District 18 (Middlesex)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Assemblywoman Quijano**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes Office of Learning Loss Czar.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT establishing the Office of the Learning Loss Czar and  
2 supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

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

6

7 1. There is created in the Executive Branch of the State  
8 Government the Office of the Learning Loss Czar. For the purposes  
9 of complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV,  
10 paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution, the Office of the  
11 Learning Loss Czar is allocated to the Department of Education, but  
12 notwithstanding this allocation, the office shall be independent of  
13 any supervision or control by the department, or by any board or  
14 officer thereof, in the performance of its duties. The office shall  
15 have the duty to collaborate with the Commissioner of Education to  
16 analyze and address learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic  
17 by:

18 a. identifying educational products, strategies, and services that  
19 have demonstrated effectiveness in identifying and reversing  
20 student learning loss, including those products, strategies, and  
21 services that are specifically designed to address learning loss  
22 experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students  
23 with disabilities;

24 b. creating and maintaining a resource bank of examples of these  
25 products, explanations of and instructions for implementing these  
26 strategies and services, and models of professional development  
27 programs related to using the products and implementing the  
28 strategies and services. School districts may submit to the office  
29 for inclusion in the resource bank, descriptions and explanations of  
30 strategies, services, and programs that they have implemented, with  
31 evidence demonstrating the positive effects achieved through  
32 implementing the strategies, services, and programs;

33 c. identifying public and private entities that may partner with  
34 school districts to provide personnel or other resources to assist in  
35 implementing strategies to overcome learning loss;

36 d. providing technical assistance to school districts, upon  
37 request, to assist in identifying and implementing strategies to  
38 address student learning loss;

39 e. supporting grant application processes related to learning loss  
40 for school districts and the Department of Education by monitoring  
41 available grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting  
42 with the grant application process; and

43 f. cooperating with institutions of higher education in  
44 researching and analyzing data on student learning loss to better  
45 understand the issue and identify the most effective means to  
46 address it.

1       2. The administrator and chief executive officer of the office is  
2 the Learning Loss Czar, who shall be a person qualified by training  
3 and experience to perform the duties of the office. The Learning  
4 Loss Czar shall be appointed by the Governor and shall serve at the  
5 pleasure of the Governor during the Governor's term of office and  
6 until the appointment and qualification of the Learning Loss Czar's  
7 successor. The Learning Loss Czar's time shall be devoted entirely  
8 to the duties of the position and shall receive a salary as determined  
9 by law. Any vacancy occurring in the position of the Learning Loss  
10 Czar shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment;  
11 except that if the Learning Loss Czar dies, resigns, becomes  
12 ineligible to serve for any reason, or is removed from office, the  
13 Governor shall appoint an acting Learning Loss Czar, who shall  
14 serve until the appointment and qualification of the Learning Loss  
15 Czar, but in no event longer than six months from the occurrence of  
16 the vacancy, and who shall exercise during this period all the  
17 powers and duties of the Learning Loss Czar pursuant to the  
18 provisions of this act.

19

20       3. The Learning Loss Czar, as administrator and chief executive  
21 officer of the office, shall:

22       a. administer and organize the work of the office and establish  
23 therein such administrative subdivisions as the Learning Loss Czar  
24 may deem necessary, proper, and expedient. The Learning Loss  
25 Czar may formulate and adopt rules and regulations and prescribe  
26 duties for the efficient conduct of the business, work, and general  
27 administration of the office. The Learning Loss Czar may delegate  
28 to subordinate officers or employees in the office such power as the  
29 Learning Loss Czar may deem desirable to be exercised under the  
30 Learning Loss Czar's supervision and control;

31       b. appoint and remove stenographic, clerical, and other  
32 secretarial assistants as may be required for the proper conduct of  
33 the office, subject to the provisions of Title 11A of the New Jersey  
34 Statutes, and other applicable statutes, and within the limits of  
35 funds appropriated or otherwise made available therefor. In  
36 addition, and within funding limits, the Learning Loss Czar may  
37 appoint, retain, or employ, without regard to the provisions of Title  
38 11A of the New Jersey Statutes or any other statutes, any officers,  
39 financial managers, social workers, or other professionally qualified  
40 personnel on a contract basis or otherwise as the Learning Loss  
41 Czar deems necessary;

42       c. maintain suitable headquarters for the office and such other  
43 quarters as the Learning Loss Czar shall deem necessary to the  
44 proper functioning of the office;

45       d. solicit and accept grants of funds from the federal  
46 government and from other public and any private sources for any  
47 of the purposes of this act;

1 e. serve as the liaison between the Office of the Learning Loss  
2 Czar and the Department of Education; and

3 f. perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this act  
4 or by any other law.

5

6 4. Pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968,  
7 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the Learning Loss Czar and the State  
8 Board of Education may adopt any rules and regulations necessary  
9 to effectuate the purposes of this act.

10

11 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

12

13

14

#### STATEMENT

15

16 This bill establishes the Office of the Learning Loss Czar in, but  
17 not of, the Department of Education. The office will have the duty  
18 to collaborate with the Commissioner of Education to analyze and  
19 address learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic by:

20 1) identifying educational products, strategies, and services that  
21 have demonstrated effectiveness in identifying and reversing  
22 student learning loss, including those products, strategies, and  
23 services that are specifically designed to address learning loss  
24 experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students  
25 with disabilities;

26 2) creating and maintaining a resource bank of examples of  
27 these products, explanations of and instructions for implementing  
28 these strategies and services, and models of professional  
29 development programs related to using the products and  
30 implementing the strategies and services. School districts may  
31 submit to the office for inclusion in the resource bank, descriptions  
32 and explanations of strategies, services, and programs that they  
33 have implemented, with evidence demonstrating the positive effects  
34 achieved through implementing the strategies, services, and  
35 programs;

36 3) identifying public and private entities that may partner with  
37 school districts to provide personnel or other resources to assist in  
38 implementing strategies to overcome learning loss;

39 4) providing technical assistance to school districts, upon  
40 request, to assist in identifying and implementing strategies to  
41 address student learning loss;

42 5) supporting grant application processes related to learning loss  
43 for school districts and the Department of Education by monitoring  
44 available grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting  
45 with the grant application process; and

46 6) cooperating with institutions of higher education in  
47 researching and analyzing data on student learning loss to better

1 understand the issue and identify the most effective means to  
2 address it.

3 The bill provides that the administrator and chief executive  
4 officer of the office will be the Learning Loss Czar, who will be a  
5 person qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of  
6 the office. The Learning Loss Czar will be appointed by the  
7 Governor and will serve at the pleasure of the Governor during the  
8 Governor's term of office and until the appointment and  
9 qualification of the Learning Loss Czar's successor. The Learning  
10 Loss Czar will administer and organize the work of the office and  
11 serve as the liaison between the office and the Department of  
12 Education.

13 The purpose of this bill is to recognize the critical nature of  
14 student learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic by  
15 establishing the independent Office of the Learning Loss Czar to  
16 spearhead Statewide initiatives to address this important issue.

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
**ASSEMBLY, No. 2288**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**221st LEGISLATURE**

ADOPTED JUNE 24, 2024

**Sponsored by:**

Assemblywoman **YVONNE LOPEZ**  
District 19 (Middlesex)  
Assemblyman **BENJIE E. WIMBERLY**  
District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)  
Assemblyman **STERLEY S. STANLEY**  
District 18 (Middlesex)  
Senator **M. TERESA RUIZ**  
District 29 (Essex and Hudson)  
Senator **SHIRLEY K. TURNER**  
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

**Co-Sponsored by:**

Assemblywomen Quijano, Reynolds-Jackson, Assemblyman Karabinchak,  
Assemblywoman Pintor Marin, Assemblyman Rodriguez, Assemblywomen  
Bagolie, Speight, Senators McKnight and Burgess

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in DOE.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Substitute as adopted by the Assembly Appropriations Committee.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/28/2024)

1 AN ACT establishing the Office of Learning Equity and Academic  
2 Recovery and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey  
3 Statutes.

4  
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
6 of New Jersey:

7  
8 1. a. There is established in the Department of Education the  
9 Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. It shall be the  
10 purpose of the office to promote student literacy and advance  
11 learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for  
12 the office shall be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and  
13 the leadership of the office shall directly advise the commissioner  
14 on these matters.

15 b. The office shall establish guidelines as necessary to effectuate  
16 the duties established pursuant to this section. The duties of the  
17 office shall include, but not be limited to:

18 (1) improving the capacity of the department to make data-driven  
19 decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies by  
20 identifying, compiling, and analyzing data collected by the  
21 department and other reputable data sources that could improve the  
22 department's understanding of the factors that impact reading,  
23 English-Language Arts, and other performance metrics of students;

24 (2) coordinating resources within the department to promote the  
25 implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration  
26 policies. These efforts may include recommending strategies for  
27 improving cohesion across all current and future literacy initiatives  
28 and providing expertise in analyzing current and future policy  
29 initiatives to ensure considerations for improving student literacy  
30 and closing academic achievement gaps experienced by students of  
31 color, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

32 (3) conducting research on State and national best practices in  
33 the areas of literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration, and  
34 providing subject matter expertise that informs future policy  
35 decisions in these areas;

36 (4) supporting school districts in developing and implementing  
37 best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional  
38 materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery  
39 through research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other  
40 appropriate methods;

41 (5) supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and  
42 leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and  
43 other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity; and

44 (6) any other duties as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

- 1       c. The office shall be funded by any combination of State or  
2 federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal  
3 funds.
- 4       d. Two years following the establishment of the office, the  
5 commissioner shall conduct a review of office operations. The  
6 review shall evaluate the success of the office in carrying out its  
7 duties established pursuant to this section, and shall include  
8 recommendations for improving the organization and administration  
9 of the office to enhance the department's capacity to promote  
10 student literacy and learning equity.
- 11
- 12       2. The Commissioner of Education shall promulgate rules  
13 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410  
14 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) as necessary to effectuate the provisions of this  
15 section.
- 16
- 17       3. This act shall take effect immediately.

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
ASSEMBLY, No. 2288

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: JUNE 24, 2024

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably an Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill No. 2288.

This committee substitute establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in the Department of Education. The purpose of the office is to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for the office are to be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and the leadership of the office is to directly advise the commissioner on these matters.

The committee substitute requires the office to establish guidelines as necessary to effectuate the duties of this office, which include:

(1) improving the capacity of the department to make data-driven decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies by identifying, compiling, and analyzing data collected by the department and other reputable data sources that could improve the department's understanding of the factors that impact reading, English-Language Arts, and other performance metrics of students;

(2) coordinating resources within the department to promote the implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration policies. These efforts may include recommending strategies for improving cohesion across all current and future literacy initiatives and providing expertise in analyzing current and future policy initiatives to ensure considerations for improving student literacy and closing academic achievement gaps experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

(3) conducting research on State and national best practices in the areas of literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration, and providing subject matter expertise that informs future policy decisions in these areas;

(4) supporting school districts in developing and implementing best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery through

research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other appropriate methods;

(5) supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity; and

(6) any other duties as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

The committee substitute provides that the office is to be funded by any combination of State or federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal funds.

Finally, the committee substitute provides that two years following the establishment of the office, the commissioner is to conduct a review of office operations. The review is to evaluate the success of the office in carrying out its duties, and is to include recommendations for improving the organization and administration of the office to enhance the department's capacity to promote student literacy and learning equity.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fiscal information for this bill is currently unavailable.

**LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE**  
**ASSEMBLY, No. 2288**  
**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**221st LEGISLATURE**

DATED: JUNE 26, 2024

**SUMMARY**

**Synopsis:** Establishes Office of Learning Loss Czar.

**Type of Impact:** Annual State expenditure increase.

**Agencies Affected:** Department of Education.

**Office of Legislative Services Estimate**

<b>Fiscal Impact</b>	<b><u>Annual</u></b>
<b>State Expenditure Increase</b>	\$260,000 to \$650,000

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill would result in an annual State expenditure increase for the establishment and operation of the Office of the Learning Loss Czar. The expenditure increase would be primarily derived from the payment of salaries and benefits to staff.
- The OLS estimates that annual staffing costs for the office would range from \$260,000, assuming the payment of salaries and benefits is for just the Learning Loss Czar position, to \$650,000, assuming the czar and three additional staff members are hired.
- The OLS determines there would also be additional indeterminate annual costs for other operating expenses of the new office.

**BILL DESCRIPTION**

This bill establishes the Office of the Learning Loss Czar in, but not of, the Department of Education. The office is tasked with collaborating with the Commissioner of Education to analyze and address learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The duties include: identifying effective educational products, strategies, and services, with a focus on addressing learning loss experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities; creating and maintaining a resource bank of the identified products, explanations of and instructions for implementing the identified strategies and services, and

models of professional development programs related to using the products and implementing the strategies and services; identifying public and private entities to partner with school districts; providing technical assistance to school districts; supporting grant application processes related to learning loss for school districts and the Department of Education; and cooperating with institutions of higher education in researching and analyzing data on learning loss.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

### ***EXECUTIVE BRANCH***

None received.

### ***OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES***

The OLS finds that the establishment of the Office of the Learning Loss Czar will result in an annual State expenditure increase that is primarily derived from the payment of salaries and benefits to staff. In estimating these staffing costs, the OLS notes that according to an Office of Management and Budget circular, the applicable fringe benefit rate for personnel who are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System is 60.8 percent of bases salaries. The OLS assumes that the Learning Loss Czar position will have a maximum total compensation of \$257,280, which is comprised of a base salary of \$160,000 and fringe benefits of \$97,280. Each additional staff member is estimated to have a total compensation of \$128,873, which is comprised of a base salary of \$80,145 and fringe benefits of \$48,728. Therefore, the total estimated staffing costs for the office would range from \$260,000, assuming the payment of salaries and benefits is for just the Learning Loss Czar position, to \$650,000, assuming the czar and three additional staff members are hired.

The OLS determines there would also be additional indeterminate annual costs for the operating expenses of the new office. For example, these expenses could include securing appropriate office space, the magnitude of which would depend on the availability of existing office space within the Department of Education.

*Section: Education*  
*Analyst: Noah Callahan*  
*Assistant Fiscal Analyst*  
*Approved: Thomas Koenig*  
*Legislative Budget and Finance Officer*

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

**LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE**  
**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR**  
**ASSEMBLY, No. 2288**  
**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**221st LEGISLATURE**

DATED: JULY 1, 2024

**SUMMARY**

**Synopsis:** Establishes Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in DOE.

**Type of Impact:** Annual State expenditure increase.

**Agencies Affected:** Department of Education.

**Office of Legislative Services Estimate**

<b>Fiscal Impact</b>	<b><u>Annual</u></b>
<b>State Expenditure Increase</b>	\$260,000 to \$650,000

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill would result in an annual State expenditure increase for the establishment and operation of the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. The expenditure increase would be primarily derived from the payment of salaries and benefits to staff.
- The OLS estimates that annual staffing costs for the office would range from \$260,000, assuming the payment of salaries and benefits is for just a chief administrator position, to \$650,000, assuming a chief administrator and three additional staff members are hired.
- The OLS determines there would also be additional indeterminate annual costs for other operating expenses of the new office.

**BILL DESCRIPTION**

This bill establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery within the Department of Education of New Jersey. The office's primary purpose is to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for the office

will be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and the office's leadership will directly advise the commissioner on matters related to these goals.

The office will also be responsible for: improving the department's capacity to make data-driven decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies; identifying, compiling, and analyzing data from various sources to better understand the factors that impact reading, English-Language Arts, and other student performance metrics; coordinating resources within the department to promote the implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration policies; conducting research on best practices in literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration; supporting school districts in developing and implementing best practices for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery; and supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity.

The bill states that the office will be funded by any combination of State and federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal funds.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

### ***EXECUTIVE BRANCH***

None received.

### ***OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES***

The OLS concludes that this bill would result in an annual State expenditure increase for the establishment and operation of the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. The expenditure increase would be primarily derived from the payment of salaries and benefits to staff. In estimating these staffing costs, the OLS notes that according to an Office of Management and Budget circular, the applicable fringe benefit rate for personnel who are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System is 60.8 percent of bases salaries. The OLS assumes that the chief administrator of this office will have total annual compensation of \$257,280, which is comprised of a base salary of \$160,000 and fringe benefits of \$97,280. Each additional staff member is estimated to have total annual compensation of \$128,873, which is comprised of a base salary of \$80,145 and fringe benefits of \$48,728, based on the median salary for a State employee in 2023. Therefore, the total estimated annual cost for the office will range from \$260,000, assuming the only new position created as a result of the bill is a chief administrator position, to \$650,000, assuming the administrator and three additional staff members are hired.

The OLS determines there would also be additional indeterminate annual costs for other operating expenses of the new office. For example, these expenses could include securing appropriate office space, the magnitude of which would depend on the availability of existing office space within the Department of Education.

*Section:* Education

*Analyst:* Noah Callahan  
Assistant Fiscal Analyst

*Approved:* Thomas Koenig  
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

**SENATE, No. 2647**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**221st LEGISLATURE**

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 8, 2024

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator M. TERESA RUIZ**

**District 29 (Essex and Hudson)**

**Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER**

**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes Office of Learning Loss Czar.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/13/2024)**

1 AN ACT establishing the Office of the Learning Loss Czar and  
2 supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

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

6

7 1. There is created in the Executive Branch of the State  
8 Government the Office of the Learning Loss Czar. For the purposes  
9 of complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV,  
10 paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution, the Office of the  
11 Learning Loss Czar is allocated to the Department of Education, but  
12 notwithstanding this allocation, the office shall be independent of  
13 any supervision or control by the department, or by any board or  
14 officer thereof, in the performance of its duties. The office shall  
15 have the duty to collaborate with the Commissioner of Education to  
16 analyze and address learning loss by:

17 a. identifying educational products, strategies, and services that  
18 have demonstrated effectiveness in identifying and reversing  
19 student learning loss, including those products, strategies, and  
20 services that are specifically designed to address learning loss  
21 experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students  
22 with disabilities;

23 b. creating and maintaining a resource bank of examples of these  
24 products, explanations of and instructions for implementing these  
25 strategies and services, and models of professional development  
26 programs related to using the products and implementing the  
27 strategies and services. School districts may submit to the office  
28 for inclusion in the resource bank, descriptions and explanations of  
29 strategies, services, and programs that they have implemented, with  
30 evidence demonstrating the positive effects achieved through  
31 implementing the strategies, services, and programs;

32 c. identifying public and private entities that may partner with  
33 school districts to provide personnel or other resources to assist in  
34 implementing strategies to overcome learning loss;

35 d. providing technical assistance to school districts, upon  
36 request, to assist in identifying and implementing strategies to  
37 address student learning loss;

38 e. supporting grant application processes related to learning loss  
39 for school districts and the Department of Education by monitoring  
40 available grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting  
41 with the grant application process; and

42 f. cooperating with institutions of higher education in  
43 researching and analyzing data on student learning loss to better  
44 understand the issue and identify the most effective means to  
45 address it.

46

47 2. The administrator and chief executive officer of the office is  
48 the Learning Loss Czar, who shall be a person qualified by training

1 and experience to perform the duties of the office. The Learning  
2 Loss Czar shall be appointed by the Governor and shall serve at the  
3 pleasure of the Governor during the Governor's term of office and  
4 until the appointment and qualification of the Learning Loss Czar's  
5 successor. The Learning Loss Czar's time shall be devoted entirely  
6 to the duties of the position and shall receive a salary as determined  
7 by law. Any vacancy occurring in the position of the Learning Loss  
8 Czar shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment;  
9 except that if the Learning Loss Czar dies, resigns, becomes  
10 ineligible to serve for any reason, or is removed from office, the  
11 Governor shall appoint an acting Learning Loss Czar, who shall  
12 serve until the appointment and qualification of the Learning Loss  
13 Czar, but in no event longer than six months from the occurrence of  
14 the vacancy, and who shall exercise during this period all the  
15 powers and duties of the Learning Loss Czar pursuant to the  
16 provisions of this act.

17

18 3. The Learning Loss Czar, as administrator and chief executive  
19 officer of the office, shall:

20 a. administer and organize the work of the office and establish  
21 therein such administrative subdivisions as the Learning Loss Czar  
22 may deem necessary, proper, and expedient. The Learning Loss  
23 Czar may formulate and adopt rules and regulations and prescribe  
24 duties for the efficient conduct of the business, work, and general  
25 administration of the office. The Learning Loss Czar may delegate  
26 to subordinate officers or employees in the office such power as the  
27 Learning Loss Czar may deem desirable to be exercised under the  
28 Learning Loss Czar's supervision and control;

29 b. appoint and remove stenographic, clerical, and other  
30 secretarial assistants as may be required for the proper conduct of  
31 the office, subject to the provisions of Title 11A of the New Jersey  
32 Statutes, and other applicable statutes, and within the limits of  
33 funds appropriated or otherwise made available therefor. In  
34 addition, and within funding limits, the Learning Loss Czar may  
35 appoint, retain, or employ, without regard to the provisions of Title  
36 11A of the New Jersey Statutes or any other statutes, any officers,  
37 financial managers, social workers, or other professionally qualified  
38 personnel on a contract basis or otherwise as the Learning Loss  
39 Czar deems necessary;

40 c. maintain suitable headquarters for the office and such other  
41 quarters as the Learning Loss Czar shall deem necessary to the  
42 proper functioning of the office;

43 d. solicit and accept grants of funds from the federal  
44 government and from other public and any private sources for any  
45 of the purposes of this act;

46 e. serve as the liaison between the Office of the Learning Loss  
47 Czar and the Department of Education; and

1 f. perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this act  
2 or by any other law.

3

4 4. Pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968,  
5 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the Learning Loss Czar and the State  
6 Board of Education may adopt any rules and regulations necessary  
7 to effectuate the purposes of this act.

8

9 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

10

11

12

### STATEMENT

13

14 This bill establishes the Office of the Learning Loss Czar in, but  
15 not of, the Department of Education. The office will have the duty  
16 to collaborate with the Commissioner of Education to analyze and  
17 address learning loss by:

18 1) identifying educational products, strategies, and services that  
19 have demonstrated effectiveness in identifying and reversing  
20 student learning loss, including those products, strategies, and  
21 services that are specifically designed to address learning loss  
22 experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students  
23 with disabilities;

24 2) creating and maintaining a resource bank of examples of  
25 these products, explanations of and instructions for implementing  
26 these strategies and services, and models of professional  
27 development programs related to using the products and  
28 implementing the strategies and services. School districts may  
29 submit to the office for inclusion in the resource bank, descriptions  
30 and explanations of strategies, services, and programs that they  
31 have implemented, with evidence demonstrating the positive effects  
32 achieved through implementing the strategies, services, and  
33 programs;

34 3) identifying public and private entities that may partner with  
35 school districts to provide personnel or other resources to assist in  
36 implementing strategies to overcome learning loss;

37 4) providing technical assistance to school districts, upon  
38 request, to assist in identifying and implementing strategies to  
39 address student learning loss;

40 5) supporting grant application processes related to learning loss  
41 for school districts and the Department of Education by monitoring  
42 available grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting  
43 with the grant application process; and

44 6) cooperating with institutions of higher education in  
45 researching and analyzing data on student learning loss to better  
46 understand the issue and identify the most effective means to  
47 address it.

1       The bill provides that the administrator and chief executive  
2 officer of the office will be the Learning Loss Czar, who will be a  
3 person qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of  
4 the office. The Learning Loss Czar will be appointed by the  
5 Governor and will serve at the pleasure of the Governor during the  
6 Governor's term of office and until the appointment and  
7 qualification of the Learning Loss Czar's successor. The Learning  
8 Loss Czar will administer and organize the work of the office and  
9 serve as the liaison between the office and the Department of  
10 Education.

11       The purpose of this bill is to recognize the critical nature of  
12 student learning loss by establishing the independent Office of the  
13 Learning Loss Czar to spearhead Statewide initiatives to address  
14 this important issue.

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
**SENATE, No. 2647**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**221st LEGISLATURE**

ADOPTED JUNE 20, 2024

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator M. TERESA RUIZ**

**District 29 (Essex and Hudson)**

**Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER**

**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Senators McKnight and Burgess**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in DOE.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Substitute as adopted by the Senate Education Committee.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/24/2024)**

1 AN ACT establishing the Office of Learning Equity and Academic  
2 Recovery and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey  
3 Statutes.

4  
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
6 of New Jersey:

7  
8 1. a. There is established in the Department of Education the  
9 Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. It shall be the  
10 purpose of the office to promote student literacy and advance  
11 learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for  
12 the office shall be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and  
13 the leadership of the office shall directly advise the commissioner  
14 on these matters.

15 b. The office shall establish guidelines as necessary to effectuate  
16 the duties established pursuant to this section. The duties of the  
17 office shall include, but not be limited to:

18 (1) improving the capacity of the department to make data-  
19 driven decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies by  
20 identifying, compiling, and analyzing data collected by the  
21 department and other reputable data sources that could improve the  
22 department's understanding of the factors that impact reading,  
23 English-Language Arts, and other performance metrics of students;

24 (2) coordinating resources within the department to promote the  
25 implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration  
26 policies. These efforts may include recommending strategies for  
27 improving cohesion across all current and future literacy initiatives  
28 and providing expertise in analyzing current and future policy  
29 initiatives to ensure considerations for improving student literacy  
30 and closing academic achievement gaps experienced by students of  
31 color, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

32 (3) conducting research on State and national best practices in  
33 the areas of literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration, and  
34 providing subject matter expertise that informs future policy  
35 decisions in these areas;

36 (4) supporting school districts in developing and implementing  
37 best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional  
38 materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery  
39 through research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other  
40 appropriate methods;

41 (5) supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and  
42 leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and  
43 other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity; and

44 (6) any other duties as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

- 1       c. The office shall be funded by any combination of State or  
2 federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal  
3 funds.
- 4       d. Two years following the establishment of the office, the  
5 commissioner shall conduct a review of office operations. The  
6 review shall evaluate the success of the office in carrying out its  
7 duties established pursuant to this section, and shall include  
8 recommendations for improving the organization and administration  
9 of the office to enhance the department's capacity to promote  
10 student literacy and learning equity.
- 11
- 12       2. The Commissioner of Education shall promulgate rules  
13 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410  
14 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) as necessary to effectuate the provisions of this  
15 section.
- 16
- 17       3. This act shall take effect immediately.

# SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE, No. 2647

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 20, 2024

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports a Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 2647.

This committee substitute establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in the Department of Education. The purpose of the office is to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for the office are to be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and the leadership of the office is to directly advise the commissioner on these matters.

The committee substitute requires the office to establish guidelines as necessary to effectuate the duties of this office, which include:

(1) improving the capacity of the department to make data-driven decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies by identifying, compiling, and analyzing data collected by the department and other reputable data sources that could improve the department's understanding of the factors that impact reading, English-Language Arts, and other performance metrics of students;

(2) coordinating resources within the department to promote the implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration policies. These efforts may include recommending strategies for improving cohesion across all current and future literacy initiatives and providing expertise in analyzing current and future policy initiatives to ensure considerations for improving student literacy and closing academic achievement gaps experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

(3) conducting research on State and national best practices in the areas of literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration, and providing subject matter expertise that informs future policy decisions in these areas;

(4) supporting school districts in developing and implementing best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery through

research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other appropriate methods;

(5) supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity; and

(6) any other duties as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

The committee substitute provides that the office is to be funded by any combination of State or federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal funds.

Finally, the committee substitute provides that two years following the establishment of the office, the commissioner is to conduct a review of office operations. The review is to evaluate the success of the office in carrying out its duties, and is to include recommendations for improving the organization and administration of the office to enhance the department's capacity to promote student literacy and learning equity.

# SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE, No. 2647

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 24, 2024

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2647 SCS.

This committee substitute establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in the Department of Education. The purpose of the office is to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for the office are to be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and the leadership of the office is to directly advise the commissioner on these matters.

The committee substitute requires the office to establish guidelines as necessary to effectuate the duties of this office, which include:

(1) improving the capacity of the department to make data-driven decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies by identifying, compiling, and analyzing data collected by the department and other reputable data sources that could improve the department's understanding of the factors that impact reading, English-Language Arts, and other performance metrics of students;

(2) coordinating resources within the department to promote the implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration policies. These efforts may include recommending strategies for improving cohesion across all current and future literacy initiatives and providing expertise in analyzing current and future policy initiatives to ensure considerations for improving student literacy and closing academic achievement gaps experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

(3) conducting research on State and national best practices in the areas of literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration, and providing subject matter expertise that informs future policy decisions in these areas;

(4) supporting school districts in developing and implementing best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery through research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other appropriate methods;

(5) supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity; and

(6) any other duties as deemed necessary by the commissioner.

The committee substitute provides that the office is to be funded by any combination of State or federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal funds.

Finally, the committee substitute provides that two years following the establishment of the office, the commissioner is to conduct a review of office operations. The review is to evaluate the success of the office in carrying out its duties, and is to include recommendations for improving the organization and administration of the office to enhance the department's capacity to promote student literacy and learning equity.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill would result in an annual State expenditure increase for the establishment and operation of the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. The expenditure increase would be primarily derived from the payment of salaries and benefits to staff.

The OLS estimates that annual staffing costs for the office would range from \$260,000, assuming the payment of salaries and benefits is for just a chief administrator position, to \$650,000, assuming a chief administrator and three additional staff members are hired.

The OLS determines there would also be additional indeterminate annual costs for other operating expenses of the new office.

**LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE**  
**SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR**  
**SENATE, No. 2647**  
**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**221st LEGISLATURE**

DATED: JUNE 28, 2024

**SUMMARY**

**Synopsis:** Establishes Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in DOE.

**Type of Impact:** Annual State expenditure increase.

**Agencies Affected:** Department of Education.

**Office of Legislative Services Estimate**

<b>Fiscal Impact</b>	<b><u>Annual</u></b>
<b>State Expenditure Increase</b>	\$260,000 to \$650,000

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill would result in an annual State expenditure increase for the establishment and operation of the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. The expenditure increase would be primarily derived from the payment of salaries and benefits to staff.
- The OLS estimates that annual staffing costs for the office would range from \$260,000, assuming the payment of salaries and benefits is for just a chief administrator position, to \$650,000, assuming a chief administrator and three additional staff members are hired.
- The OLS determines there would also be additional indeterminate annual costs for other operating expenses of the new office.

**BILL DESCRIPTION**

This bill establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery within the Department of Education of New Jersey. The office's primary purpose is to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices. Personnel for the office will be selected by the Commissioner of Education, and the office's leadership will directly advise the commissioner on matters related to these goals.

The office will also be responsible for: improving the department's capacity to make data-driven decisions regarding literacy and learning equity policies; identifying, compiling, and analyzing data from various sources to better understand the factors that impact reading, English-Language Arts, and other student performance metrics; coordinating resources within the department to promote the implementation of effective literacy and learning acceleration policies; conducting research on best practices in literacy, learning equity, and learning acceleration; supporting school districts in developing and implementing best practices for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery; and supporting the department in seeking out opportunities and leading efforts to obtain funding, professional development, and other policy supports that promote literacy and learning equity.

The bill states that the office will be funded by any combination of State and federal funds, in accordance with the requirements of any federal funds.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

### ***EXECUTIVE BRANCH***

None received.

### ***OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES***

The OLS concludes that this bill would result in an annual State expenditure increase for the establishment and operation of the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery. The expenditure increase would be primarily derived from the payment of salaries and benefits to staff. In estimating these staffing costs, the OLS notes that according to an Office of Management and Budget circular, the applicable fringe benefit rate for personnel who are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System is 60.8 percent of bases salaries. The OLS assumes that the chief administrator of this office will have total annual compensation of \$257,280, which is comprised of a base salary of \$160,000 and fringe benefits of \$97,280. Each additional staff member is estimated to have total annual compensation of \$128,873, which is comprised of a base salary of \$80,145 and fringe benefits of \$48,728, based on the median salary for a State employee in 2023. Therefore, the total estimated annual cost for the office will range from \$260,000, assuming the only new position created as a result of the bill is a chief administrator position, to \$650,000, assuming the administrator and three additional staff members are hired.

The OLS determines there would also be additional indeterminate annual costs for other operating expenses of the new office. For example, these expenses could include securing appropriate office space, the magnitude of which would depend on the availability of existing office space within the Department of Education.

*Section:*            *Education*  
*Analyst:*         *Noah Callahan*  
                          *Assistant Fiscal Analyst*  
*Approved:*      *Thomas Koenig*  
                          *Legislative Budget and Finance Officer*

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Bolstering Literacy Education for New Jersey Students

08/13/2024

**TRENTON** – During this year’s [State of the State Address](#), Governor Phil Murphy pledged to introduce new initiatives to increase literacy rates among New Jersey schoolchildren, furthering the state’s status as home to one of the best public education systems in the nation. Today, in collaboration with partners in the Legislature, the Governor signed two bills into law advancing his promise to set New Jersey’s students on course for lifelong success. The legislation will establish new initiatives to ensure young learners have access to the tools and resources needed to become strong, confident readers while also empowering our workforce of educators with professional development opportunities.

“Literacy education represents the foundation upon which all future learning is built, and we owe it to our children to give them the strongest foundation possible. By bolstering support for literacy education, we are enabling New Jersey students to thrive both academically and in life, helping them to become informed, thoughtful, and engaged citizens,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Recent years have brought forth many challenges for our schools and our children. Understanding that strong reading skills have the potential to open countless doors for young learners, we must work together to support accelerated literacy learning in communities across the state. This legislation balances targeted intervention, tested learning strategies, teacher training, and continuous monitoring to ensure we deliver for our students. I thank Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz for championing this important work in the Legislature, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact of these initiatives on our school communities.”

“Student literacy, especially for our youngest learners, is both fundamental to all student learning and a core element to bridging achievement and opportunity gaps,” **said Kevin Dehmer, Acting Commissioner of Education**. “These new initiatives, when coupled with our other programs to foster literacy, such as high-impact tutoring for students and existing professional development for teachers, can help students build those foundational skills that are so crucial to learning. These combined efforts will have lasting benefits for generations of students.”

The first bill – [S2644/A4303](#) – aims to strengthen foundational literacy instruction by establishing a Working Group on Student Literacy. This group, comprised of members appointed by the Commissioner of Education from all regions of the state, will be responsible for making recommendations to the Department of Education on the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies, screening methods, and instruction for students, in addition to investigating ways to expand professional learning.

Based on these recommendations, the Department will develop and publish guidance for school districts to use beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, and shall establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district’s implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts. Additionally, the Department will create a professional development program for early education teaching staff, including librarians, and those serving multilingual learners and/or students with disabilities. This will be available to all districts at no cost.

Under the bill, districts will be required to conduct literacy screenings at least twice annually for students in grades K-3, beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. Districts must notify parents and guardians of their child's results within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period. The Fiscal Year 2025 budget includes \$5.25 million for literacy initiatives to advance this work.

The primary sponsors of S2644/A4303 are Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz, Senator Vin Gopal, Assemblywoman Carmen Morales, Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt, Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, and Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin.

"This is a forward-looking package of educational enhancement bills that will help rectify pandemic-related learning loss, close the achievement gap and improve literacy rates for our students," **said Senate President Nick Scutari**. "The literacy instruction and intervention programs will be especially important for students who have experienced academic disparities. They will help advance educational equity in New Jersey's schools. I want to commend Senate Majority Leader Ruiz, Senator Gopal and Senator Turner for their collaborative work with the Department of Education, our Assembly colleagues and education advocacy groups to get this done."

"Increased equity in education, especially for foundational literacy, will serve every community in New Jersey," **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. "When every child in our state has greater opportunity to succeed, we all benefit. These laws will ensure more strategic use of resources for our best-in-the-nation public schools. I want to commend my colleagues for all of their work on this legislation, partnering with teachers and other experts and advocates in the field to deliver for New Jersey's kids."

"The bills signed today establish a framework to address the alarming fact that 57.6% of all third graders statewide are not meeting reading proficiency levels, with even more troubling rates for students of color, with 73.6% of Black and 72.5% of Latino third graders not reading at grade level," **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. "These initiatives are a major step toward reversing these trends by strengthening foundational literacy instruction and addressing long standing educational inequities across New Jersey."

"Reading is the cornerstone of learning and academic achievement, and if we do not intervene now, another generation of children will fail to achieve their academic and economic potential," **added Senator Ruiz**. "Early success in school significantly boosts the likelihood of students obtaining a high school diploma, pursuing higher education, and improving their future earning potential. The data is clear - median earnings rise from \$35,500 for those without a high school diploma to \$66,600 for those with a bachelor's degree. Setting our children up for success in life begins in the classroom. This is not only an investment in their futures but in the future of our communities."

"This is one of the smartest investments the state can make," **said Senator Paul Sarlo, Chair of the Senate Budget Committee**. "Giving our students the skills and knowledge they need to pursue educational achievement and compete in the rapidly-evolving workplace will improve their future opportunities and contribute to the state's economy. Our schools are an important foundation for educational excellence and economic progress. This initiative will help build a better future for New Jersey."

"There is no greater investment we can make than investing in our children and this legislation will help us do that," **said Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin, Chair of the Assembly Budget Committee**. "Specifically, it will enable us to focus on evidence-based practices and will assist us in identifying and addressing exactly where students face reading difficulties, ensuring timely and effective interventions for those in need."

“New Jersey public schools are among the finest in the nation, yet too often our children struggle to meet basic literacy proficiency thresholds,” **said Senator Vin Gopal, Chair of the Senate Education Committee.** “Securing our children’s success later in life begins in the classroom. These foundational literacy skills can determine a student’s academic success, college readiness, and future career and economic prospects. Establishing a framework for reading assessments and interventions will give teachers and school districts a reliable resource to draw from in order to help all our students reach their fullest potential.”

“Today marks a pivotal moment in our efforts to enhance literacy instruction in New Jersey,” **said Assemblywoman Carmen Morales.** “This new law will be instrumental in helping us ensure that every child receives the foundational skills needed to succeed in the classroom, fostering a brighter and more equitable future for our students.”

“This legislation is a testament to our continued commitment to education excellence. By focusing on early intervention and continued support, we are laying the groundwork for long-term success in schools,” **said Assembly Education Committee Chair Pamela Lampitt.** “I applaud today’s signing of this important bill and know that it will help strengthen our already top-notch education system.”

“By instituting universal literacy screenings, we are taking proactive steps to address reading challenges early on,” **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano.** “This law will provide an invaluable resource for our teachers and ensure that every student receives the necessary support to develop stronger reading skills.”

The second bill – [A2288/S2647](#) – establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in the Department of Education to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices.

The office will be responsible for improving the Department’s capacity to make data-driven decisions, coordinate resources, and research best practices to support the creation of effective literacy, learning equity, learning acceleration policies, and professional development opportunities.

The primary sponsors for A2288/S2647 are Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz, Senator Shirley Turner, Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez, Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly, and Assemblyman Sterley Stanley.

“Recent state test scores show significant drops in student performance compared to pre-pandemic, with preexisting disparities worsening for low-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities,” **said Senator Shirley Turner.** “The academic performance data is abundant and alarming, and we must utilize it in our efforts to ensure all students have a fair shot at success in school. Establishing the new Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery will help improve our understanding of the factors that impact students reading ability and will implement new data-driven strategies to get students back on track.”

“Establishing the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery enables us to take a critical step to provide our students with the resources they need to achieve their full academic potential,” **said Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez.** “The legislation signed into law today works to ensure that our school districts have access to such vital information, allowing them to make data-driven decisions regarding their literacy and learning equity policies.”

“The office being created through this bill will provide the necessary resources and expertise to close achievement gaps, particularly for our most vulnerable students,” **said Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly.** “By focusing on effective strategies and partnerships, we can strengthen student literacy and advance learning equity, leading to improved educational outcomes across the state.”

“Our goal is to provide every student with the opportunity to succeed, regardless of the obstacles they’ve faced,” **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. “This bill being signed today will play a vital role in collecting and analyzing relevant data in order to ensure that we, as a State that prides itself on the world class education we are able to offer, implement the most effective solutions so our students can continue to thrive.”

“Early literacy is the foundation for academic success,” **said NJEA President Sean M. Spiller**. “We owe it to our children to give them every resource and every opportunity they need as they learn to read. Every child learns in a different way and at a different pace. We hope that this new effort will give our members more tools to identify challenges, offer needed supports and help their students succeed.”

“The New Jersey Parent Teacher Association (NJPTA) supports the Literacy Bill Package (Bill A2288ACS and S2644/2645/2646 SCS). This legislation establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery within the Department of Education (DOE), mandates universal literacy screenings for students from kindergarten through grade three and requires professional development for specific school district employees,” **said Sharon Roseboro, President of NJPTA**. “Research indicates that children who engage in reading at home are better prepared for academic success. Additionally, reading has been shown to enhance mental function. To ensure all children have equal opportunities, it is crucial to support measures that level the playing field. Parental involvement is vital to the success of these initiatives.”

“New Jersey’s public education system consistently produces some of the best student outcomes in the nation. However, Governor Murphy and legislators recognize that student literacy achievement must not only return to pre-COVID-19 levels but also surpass them. Today’s endorsed legislation underscores this critical goal and introduces measures for both support and accountability to ensure its achievement,” **said Richard Bozza, Executive Director of NJASA**.

“The New Jersey Children’s Foundation shares the administration and Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz’s belief that learning to read is such a critical factor in lifelong success. That is why we truly appreciate the Governor signing this legislation which takes very necessary steps forward in improving our ability to teach all students to read at an early age,” **said Barbara Martinez, Executive Director of the New Jersey Children’s Foundation**.

“JerseyCAN is thrilled and thankful for Governor Murphy’s great leadership, Senate Majority Leader Ruiz’s collaborative efforts, and the commitment of cross-sector organizations, educators, and parents to get us to this bold step of the passage of foundational literacy and academic recovery legislation that, though not a magic bullet, is the sorely-needed equalizer that all of New Jersey’s children deserve. Governor Murphy once stated that New Jersey is where opportunity lives, where education is valued, and where justice is embraced and today, as the Governor cements pivotal foundational literacy and academic recovery legislation into law, these words ring resoundingly true,” **said Paula White, Executive Director of JerseyCAN**.

“We thank Governor Murphy, Majority Leader Ruiz and all the legislative sponsors for recognizing the urgency of the challenges facing New Jersey’s schools, from learning loss to longstanding resource gaps in our urban centers. These new laws were the product of collaboration with a broad array of education stakeholders and will give more schools, both district and public charter schools, the tools to grow and expand their literacy programs to meet the needs of our youngest learners. While this policy response will require a continued all-hands-on-deck approach, New Jersey’s public charter schools stand ready to meet that challenge,” **said Harry Lee, President and CEO of the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association**.

“Literacy is the essential skill that serves as the foundation for all learning. The New Jersey School Boards Association thanks Governor Murphy for prioritizing this issue and Senate Majority Leader Ruiz for her leadership in spearheading these critical measures that demonstrate her commitment to the children of New Jersey. And we applaud the entire Legislature for taking swift and bipartisan action in promoting and approving these bills, which will better prepare New Jersey’s students to become lifelong learners and productive citizens. We look forward to seeing the positive impact they will have on students’ academic achievement,” **said Dr. Timothy J. Purnell, NJSBA Executive Director and CEO.**

“Foundational literacy skills are not only the cornerstone of a high quality education but serve as the key to lifelong success, something every New Jersey student deserves. The school leaders who make up the membership of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, in partnership with loving parents and dedicated teachers, are committed to developing all students’ literacy skills at the earliest possible ages. This legislative package was developed collaboratively with the Legislature, the Governor, and education stakeholders, and NJPSA wants to thank Senator Ruiz and Governor Murphy for their commitment to our children. From ABCs to written worlds to be explored, NJ’s future readers are fortunate to learn here!” **said Debra Bradley, NJPSA Director of Government Relations, and Karen Bingert, NJPSA Executive Director.**

“ACNJ commends the Legislature and the Administration for these intentional policies to address literacy amongst New Jersey school-aged children. With only 42 percent of third graders meeting or exceeding proficiency standards in English language arts, there is a pressing need for action. Statewide efforts, including understanding student literacy, implementing literacy screenings, and supporting educators, are crucial and speak to New Jersey’s commitment to investing in children,” **said Mary Coogan, President & CEO, Advocates for Children of NJ.**

“With Gov. Murphy signing legislation to establish the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery and a working group on student literacy, along with mandating universal K-3 literacy screenings, New Jersey’s students who have fallen behind will have the resources and personnel they need to get back on track,” **said AFTNJ President Jennifer S. Higgins.**

“We are delighted to see these bills come to fruition and thankful to Senator Ruiz for her sponsorship and advocacy. The real beneficiaries are the children of New Jersey, whose lives will be changed by this literacy initiative,” **said Elisabeth Ginsburg, Executive Director, Garden State Coalition of Schools.**

“On behalf of the New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NJSHA), an organization representing more than 1,100 speech-language pathologists and audiologists working in schools as well as health care settings and private practice, I first want to thank Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz for her vision and leadership on the issue of student literacy,” **said Dr. Karen Kimberlin, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) who specializes in language and literacy disorders, and who represented the Association on the Literacy Working Group created by the Majority Leader.** “We also thank the Assembly sponsors of the bills, Education Chair Pamela Lampitt and Housing Chair Yvonne Lopez and of course, Governor Murphy for signing this legislation today. SLPs are experts in language development, both oral expression and language comprehension, which are critical to the development of literacy skills. So, we are pleased that a Speech Language Specialist (SLS), as SLPs are called in school settings, will have a role in implementing these laws as a member of the Working Group on Student Literacy in the Department of Education.”

“The ability to communicate effectively is the cornerstone of learning. New Jersey Tutoring Corps, Inc. wholeheartedly supports the signing of bills S2644/45/46, providing measures to strengthen literacy education for NJ children and their teachers. Further, we strongly support the signing of bill A2288, establishing an office focused on learning equity and academic recovery. Together, these bills will provide NJ students, particularly our students who are furthest

behind, with more opportunities to succeed both academically and in terms of their confidence as learners. Thank you, Senator Ruiz and Governor Murphy, for your efforts on behalf of education for all students in our state," **said Katherine Bassett, CEO NJ Tutoring Corps.**

"The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) applauds Governor Murphy on the passage of the legislative initiatives to support student literacy (S2644,2645,2646). To most powerfully address reading deficiency, NJASL believes we must pair the foundational literacy skills with the simple joy of reading, and this really is the core mission of the school librarian. The thrill of a new book in the hands of a child after a school library visit or the excitement of students clamoring to ask questions of an author after a reading - to witness these interactions is to understand the superpowers of the school librarian and their ability to support student reading!" **said Beth Raff, President of New Jersey Association of School Libraries.**

"Early literacy in any language is essential for student success. NJTESOL/NJBE is encouraged that these bills will support Multilingual Learners' success in reading by providing academic assistance for all struggling early readers," **said Kathleen Fernandez, Executive Director, NJ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/NJ Bilingual Educators.**

"Save Our Schools NJ thanks Governor Murphy and Senator Ruiz for their commitment to the students of New Jersey. Making sure districts have resources is fundamental to their ongoing literacy efforts," **said Julie Larrea Borst, Executive Director, Save Our School NJ Community Organizing.**

"Strengthening reading and literacy outcomes for students gives them a better head start in all walks of life and provides improved preparation for continuing their post-secondary education or for entering the workforce, even for youth workers. We thank the sponsors and supporters of this legislation, as well as Governor Murphy, for giving our students even more opportunity toward professional and personal development in these early stages," **said NJBIA President and CEO Michele Siekerka.**

"We are pleased to see legislation passed which finally starts NJ school districts addressing our general education literacy proficiency issues by using best practices, based in reading science, for reading instruction with all children. Additionally, we are thankful for legislation which will require all K-3 universal literacy screenings to help identify children early who might have reading challenges, like Dyslexia and get the appropriate intervention they need before they fall so far behind!" **said Elizabeth Barnes, Founding Member, Decoding Dyslexia-NJ.**