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AN ACT concerning the eligibility of certain students under the “Bridge Year Pilot Program” and amending P.L.2020, c.41.

Modifies age eligibility criteria for certain classified students under “Bridge Year Pilot Program.”

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PRIME Sponsor _____ / _____

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Same as _____ 18/19 Same as _____ 20/21

Suggested allocation:

AN ACT concerning the eligibility of certain students under the “Bridge Year Pilot Program” and amending P.L.2020, c.41.

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

1. Section 2 of P.L.2020, c.41 is amended to read as follows:

2. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a three-year “Bridge Year Pilot Program,” under which each school district with a high school shall offer students in the graduating class of 2021 and the graduating class of 2022 the opportunity to pursue a bridge year during the year immediately following their senior year of high school, in accordance with the provisions of this act. The purpose of the pilot program shall be to provide participating students an additional year to address learning loss and missed opportunities in extracurricular activities, including spring sports programs, as a result of the public health state of emergency caused by the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

A nonpublic school may elect to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program.

Under the pilot program, each high school in a school district shall designate a school staff member as a bridge year liaison to serve as the school’s central point of contact for students interested in pursuing a bridge year pursuant to this act and for students participating in a bridge year. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require a school district to hire an individual to serve as a bridge year liaison.

b. A student in the graduating class of 2021 or the graduating class of 2022 who has met all applicable high school graduation requirements by the end of the senior year of high school may defer graduation from high school to pursue a bridge year. A student who intends to pursue a bridge year shall notify his host high school’s bridge year liaison of that intent no later than the first day of the second semester of the student’s senior year of high school. The host high school shall permit students participating in the bridge year to participate in graduation ceremonies with the graduating class of 2021 or class of 2022, as applicable, but shall not issue diplomas to those students until the conclusion of the bridge year. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require a student to pursue a bridge year. To be eligible to participate in the bridge year program, a student shall be 19 years of age or younger and shall not turn 20 years of age at any time during the bridge year, except that a classified student shall be eligible to participate if the student will turn 20 years of age **or 21 years of age** during the bridge year due to services provided pursuant to the student’s individualized education program.

c. (1) A student pursuing a bridge year shall remain enrolled in the host high school while participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. A bridge year liaison shall develop, in consultation with a

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

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student pursuing a bridge year, an individual learning plan for the student. The individual learning plan shall define academic and co-curricular goals for the bridge year and detail activities and strategies for accomplishing those goals including, but not limited to, counseling, academic support, coursework, and co-curricular or athletic participation. During the fall semester of the student's bridge year, the student shall take between nine and 12 credits at the host high school, the county college that serves the county of the host high school, or a combination thereof. During the spring semester of the student's bridge year, the student shall take between nine and 12 credits at the county college that serves the county of the host high school. The credits taken by a student pursuant to this paragraph shall together form a coordinated sequence of academic content that prepares the student for high-skill, high wage, or in-demand occupations. At the conclusion of each semester of the bridge year, the host high school shall update the student's high school transcript to reflect any high school credits earned during the bridge year. For the purpose of enrolling in college credits pursuant to this paragraph, the student shall be considered a non-matriculated student of the county college. A student who pursues a bridge year and participates in a spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association pursuant to section 3 of this act shall enroll in less than 12 college credits, or otherwise be enrolled in a number of college credits as to not be considered a full-time college student, in each of the fall and spring semesters during the student's bridge year.

(2) The student shall maintain a grade point average of 2.0 in order to remain in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. The county college or other institution of higher education which a student pursuing a bridge year is attending shall report at least quarterly to the bridge year liaison at a student's host high school, in a manner specified by the student's individual learning plan developed pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection, concerning the student's academic progress and performance.

(3) A county college shall charge students participating in a bridge year pursuant to this act a maximum of \$145 per credit inclusive of all fees, except that fees associated with specific courses or with the use of on-campus science laboratories may be charged at a maximum of \$45 per course.

(4) During a semester of the bridge year, a student may take three credits offered by a four-year institution of higher education at any high school in the State or at any other location to fulfill the student's credit requirement. The four-year institution shall charge the student no more than is permitted pursuant to paragraph (3) of this subsection and shall report to the student's bridge year liaison as required pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection.

d. Notwithstanding the requirement established under the Community College Opportunity Grant Program to be enrolled in a course of study or a curriculum leading to a degree or certificate and subject to the availability of funds in the annual appropriations act, a

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student pursuing a bridge year shall be eligible for a financial aid grant under the Community College Opportunity Grant Program if the student meets all other applicable eligibility requirements.

e. A public institution of higher education shall, pursuant to P.L.2007, c.175 (C.18A:62-46 et seq.), accept all applicable credits that a student, who completed a bridge year pursuant to this act, earned during the bridge year. An independent institution of higher education in the State may elect to accept the credits that a student earned during the bridge year.

f. In the event that a student initially decides to pursue a bridge year in the fall semester but does not continue the bridge year in the spring semester, the student’s host high school shall release all final transcripts and other records as necessary and as may be requested. A student who decides not to continue the bridge year in the spring semester shall not be eligible to participate in a spring sports program or extracurricular activities pursuant to this act.

(cf: P.L.2020, c.41, s.2)

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill amends the law establishing the “Bridge Year Pilot Program” to specify that a classified student, who will turn 21 years of age during a bridge year due to services provided pursuant to the an individualized education program, is eligible to participate in the pilot program. The law currently states that, to be eligible to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program, a student must be 19 years of age or younger and cannot turn 20 years of age at any time during the bridge year. A classified student, however, is eligible to participate if the student will turn 20 years of age during the bridge year.

Modifies age eligibility criteria for certain classified students under “Bridge Year Pilot Program.”

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