

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Offering an Additional Year of Special Education to Students with Disabilities

06/16/2021

*The Extension Will Be Available to the Classes of 2021, 2022, and 2023*

**TRENTON** – Building on his commitment to ensuring a high-quality education for all New Jersey students, Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S3434/A5366) to offer an additional year of public education and related services to students with disabilities. This bill will provide a temporary one-year extension of special education and related services to students with disabilities who exceed, or will exceed, the current age of eligibility for special education and related services in the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, or 2022-2023 school year following a determination by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team that such education and/or services are necessary.

"The pandemic has been especially hard on students with disabilities who rely on school programs to ensure they have the skills and services they need to be successful following graduation," **said Governor Murphy**. "By providing an additional year for students who will otherwise age out allows us to acknowledge the unique impact of the pandemic on these students and help secure a better future for them and their families."

The Department of Education (DOE) estimates that approximately 8,700 students across the state are expected to age out of their special education services over the course of the three applicable school years under this legislation, an estimated cost of approximately \$600 million over three years. Today, Governor Murphy announced that the Administration will be allocating federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to cover the cost of the temporary expansion of these services.

"In New Jersey, we are committed to providing a quality education to all students, especially to those who are most vulnerable," **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "We know the global pandemic has adversely impacted our students with special needs who have an individualized education program, and this important measure will extend the academics and supports to those students who would otherwise "age out" of the school system."

"Enactment of this measure is a tremendous victory for advocates and families who worked tirelessly for its passage, and who fight every day to ensure their children have access to vital resources and services," **said Senate President Steve Sweeney**. "The extension is a crucial lifeline to students on the brink of aging out who lost educational services to the pandemic at a critical time for them and their families. Because of COVID-19, they experienced real hardships that made it difficult for them to participate in the services and activities that will enable them to realize their potential. This measure will provide a bridge to independence so these students can regain the skill-based training that was stolen by COVID-19."

"This bill is about hope and a belief that all children should have the opportunity to achieve their potential. Although today's signing recognizes the end of a difficult legislative path, it pales in comparison to the fight the parents of these wonderful children tireless face every day. Thank you Governor Murphy and thank you to every parent and every advocate who worked to get this done," **said Senator Dawn Addiego**. "The disability community was among the hardest hit by this pandemic, but through this legislation students on the brink of aging out will be able to remain in school for an extra year, to make up for the time lost over the last 18 months."

"Every student has felt the impact of a year of disruption and isolation. This is particularly true for special education students who thrive on routine and structure," **said Assembly sponsors Assemblymembers Valerie Vainieri Huttie, Pamela Lampitt, and John McKeon**. "Extending educational services to students who will otherwise 'age out' over the

next several years will help prepare for a year of the academic and social learning delays caused by the pandemic, as well as prepare them to transition to the next phase of their lives.”

To view the Governor’s signing statement, [click here](#)

(<https://d31hzlkh6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20210616/76/3e/a6/ac/aec32f4bab83a0af49c37b95/S3434.pdf>)

## Governor Phil Murphy

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Office of Governor PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000

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