

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6431

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to assistance for schools in implementing youth suicide prevention activities.

Brief Description: Concerning assistance for schools in implementing youth suicide prevention activities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hargrove, Kohl-Welles, Lias, Kline, Rolfes, Parlette, Frockt, Pedersen and Conway).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/20/14, 2/26/14 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to work with state agencies and community partners to assist schools in implementing youth suicide prevention activities.
- Directs the OSPI to prioritize funding appropriated for youth suicide prevention activities to certain schools and communities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Magendanz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Fey, Haigh, Hargrove, Hawkins, Hayes, S. Hunt, Klippert, Lytton, Muri, Orwall, Parker, Pollet, Seaquist and Warnick.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

According to the Department of Health (DOH), suicide is the second leading cause of death for Washington state youth ages 10-24 and the third leading cause of death nationally. In this state and nationally, white individuals commit suicide most often, followed by Native American individuals.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) oversees K-12 public education in Washington and works with the state's 295 school districts. In 2011 the Legislature required the OSPI to work with state agencies and community partners to develop pilot projects to assist schools in implementing youth suicide prevention activities.

In the 2013 legislative session, the Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1336. This law increased the capacity of school districts to recognize and respond to youth with emotional or behavioral distress, including indicators of possible youth suicide, by adding trainings, requiring improved planning, and encouraging partnerships with mental health and social services agencies in the community.

Summary of Bill:

The OSPI is directed to work with state agencies and community partners to assist schools in implementing youth suicide prevention activities which may include:

- training for school employees, parents, community members, and students in recognizing and responding to the signs of suicide;
- partnering with local coalitions of community members interested in preventing youth suicide; and
- responding to communities determined to be in crisis to prevent further instances of suicide after a suicide or attempted suicide.

The OSPI is directed to work with state agencies and community partners to prioritize funding appropriated for youth suicide prevention activities for:

- schools identified by the DOH as situated in high-risk areas or in a communities with high-risk populations;
- tribal communities; and
- communities with a high percentage of students who speak English as a second language.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) When teen suicide occurs in a school it is traumatic for everyone in the community, so there needs to be more community engagement. Any time a child has suicidal thoughts, it should be taken seriously. The more adults who know the signs of suicide, the more likely at-risk children are to be identified. Counseling services are often underfunded, but this bill might help encourage funding of these programs. Every week, two young people die of suicide and 17 are hospitalized by an attempt. Effective trainings exist to help people respond to suicidal youth. High performing students are at high risk. This bill does not solve the problem; it is merely a way to direct funding to those areas most in need. There are already trainings for educators, counselors, and nurses, but this bill addresses trainings for community persons. The work is not duplicative; it is complementary.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Sherry Krainick, Washington State PTA; and Melanie Smith, Youth Suicide Prevention Program.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Lucy Luddington.