

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6431

As of February 6, 2014

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: Senators Hargrove, Kohl-Welles, Liias, Kline, Rolfes, Parlette, Frockt, Pedersen and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/05/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Katherine Taylor (786-7434)

Background: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is the primary agency charged with overseeing K-12 public education in Washington State. OSPI works with the state's 295 school districts.

Currently, OSPI is required by law to work with state agency and community partners to develop pilot projects to assist schools in implementing youth suicide prevention activities.

In the 2013 legislative session, ESHB 1336, an act relating to increasing the capacity of school districts to recognize and respond to troubled youth, passed and became law. This law increases the capacity for school districts to recognize and respond to youth in need, including emotional and behavioral distress in students and indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, and suicide, through additional training, more comprehensive planning, and emphasis on partnerships between schools and communities.

Summary of Bill: OSPI must work with state agency and community partners to assist schools in implementing youth suicide prevention activities, which may include the following:

- Training for school employees, parents, community members, and students in recognizing and responding to the signs of suicide;

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- Partnering with local coalitions of community members interested in preventing youth suicide; and
- Responding to communities determined to be in crisis after a suicide or attempted suicide to prevent further instances of suicide.

OSPI, working with state and community partners, must prioritize funding appropriated for implementing such youth suicide prevention activities, to the following schools and communities:

- Schools identified by the department of health as situated in a high-risk area or in a community with high-risk populations;
- Tribal communities; and
- Communities with a high percentage of students who speak English as a second language.

Appropriation: \$430,000 or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending in June 30, 2015, from the general fund to OSPI.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: I am strongly in support of this bill. Suicide remains a problem here in Washington State. The rate here is higher than in other states. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for teens in Washington. Suicide prevention can help these kids. This bill would put important structures in place. This bill would help educate kids on this subject. Suicide affects families and communities. Native Americans suffer a higher rate of suicide. Grays Harbor County has a high percentage of suicides. Youth need more support and services on preventing suicide.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Vicki Wagner, Youth Suicide Prevention Program; Macie Briggs, High School Student; Tasha Rosander, Shoalwater Bay Reservation; Anne McEvoy, GAL for CASA Montesano.